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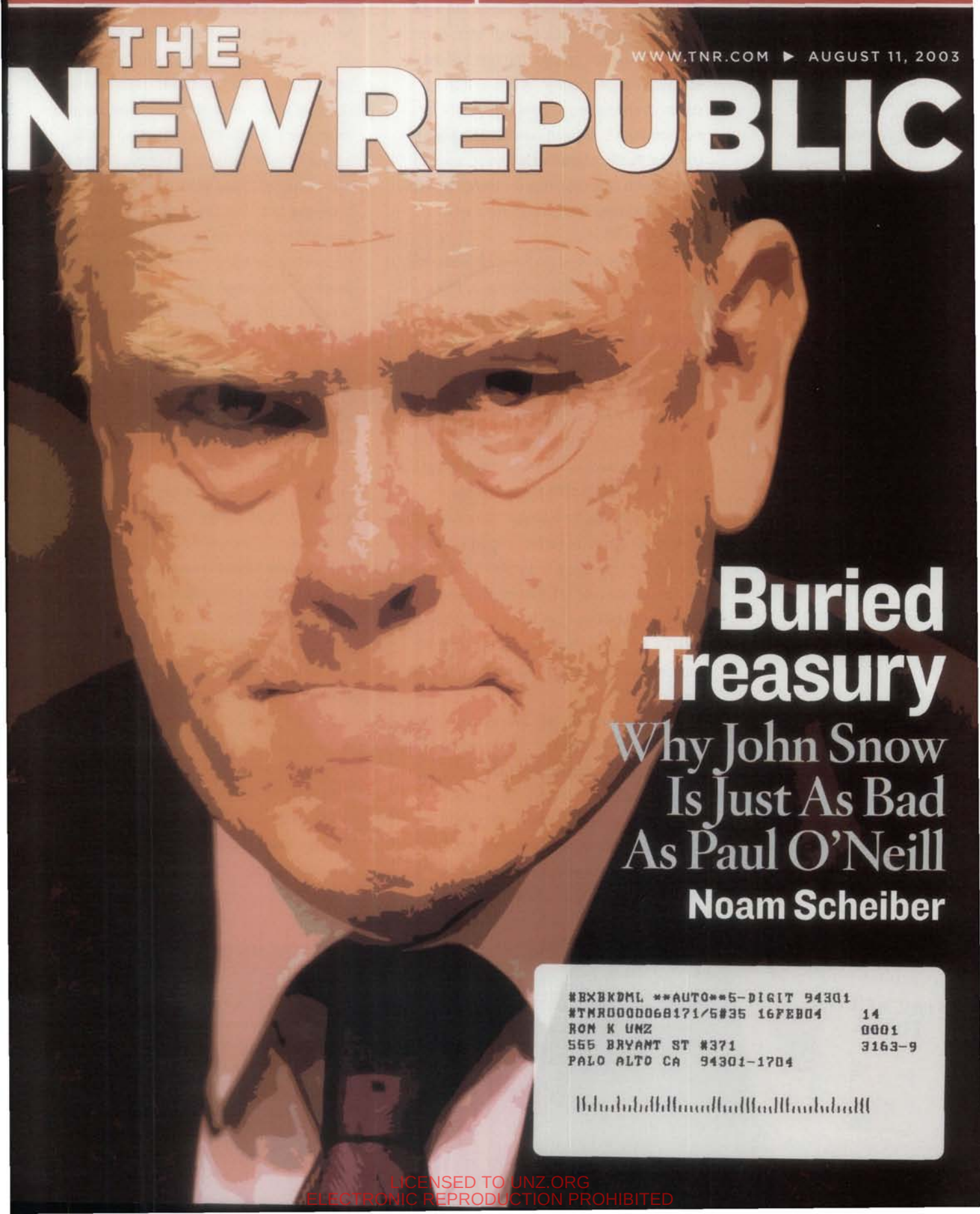

Buried Treasury

Why John Snow Is Just As Bad As Paul O'Neill

Noam Scheiber

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The Crash of Top-Down Reform?

John E. Chubb is chief education officer, Edison Schools; distinguished visiting fellow, Hoover Institution; and member, Hoover's Koret Task Force on K–12 Education.

If school reform comes in waves, the latest, and some would say greatest, wave of reform may have just crested. The idea that public education can be reformed by setting high standards and holding schools accountable for reaching them is showing unmistakable signs of crashing. **Public education is finding ways to comply with accountability standards without really improving.** This spring three critical examples emerged.

April 2003 marked the twentieth anniversary of the landmark federal study *A Nation at Risk (ANAR),* giving journalists and researchers occasion to look back at the fate of some of the study's key recommendations. In a Koret-sponsored study, *Our Children and Our Future,* and in a front-page story in *Education Week,* we learn that high school students today are taking more academic courses than students were in 1983—but not learning any more. From 1982 to 1998 the percentage of students taking the "new basics" recommended by *ANAR* jumped from 14 percent of graduates to 56 percent, but high school test scores on the federal National Assessment of Education Progress have barely budged. What *ANAR* failed to anticipate when it called for higher standards was the apparent watering down of tougher courses to make them more palatable.

But states did not stop with increasing high school course requirements. During the 1990s many states began requiring students to pass standardized tests to receive their high school diplomas. In the last year, however, at least five states—including trendsetters California, Florida, and Massachusetts—have relaxed their testing standards because too many students, after satisfying their course requirements, would have been denied diplomas based on their test scores.

The retreat on standards is not taking place just in high schools. In 2002 President Bush and Congress agreed on tough achievement standards for grades 3–8 in No Child Left Behind (NCLB), legislation hailed by many as historic. For the first time the United States would have something akin to the standards that other high-achieving nations have had for years. But faced with large numbers of schools that are failing to make "adequate yearly progress," states have begun lowering the federal standard. NCLB requires that all public schools bring all students to "proficiency" within ten years but leaves it to the states to define proficiency. In recent years many states had set tough proficiency standards, but with their schools now threatened with federal sanctions, states are lowering their definitions of proficiency.

Students and their families are the losers, but they need not be. **Before standards and accountability come crashing down altogether, policymakers should remember that there is another wave of reform that has also been sweeping the nation**—and that holds a prominent place in NCLB: school choice. Give families the right and the means to choose for their children schools that are achieving—other traditional public schools, new public charter schools, even private schools—and force schools to compete for their students. Parents will select schools that meet high standards. Schools that try to skirt standards will not be chosen and will be driven out of business. Through school choice, the nation might ride the accountability wave to higher standards and scores.

— *John E. Chubb*

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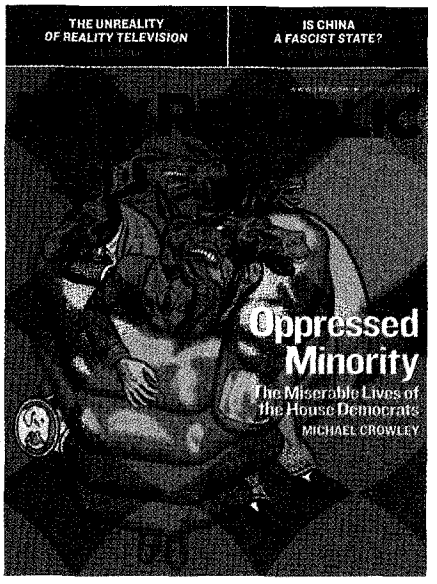
THE UNREALITY OF REALITY TELEVISION
IS CHINA A FASCIST STATE?
Oppressed Minority
The Miserable Lives of the House Democrats
MICHAEL CROWLEY

EQUAL INOPPORTUNITY

MICHAEL CROWLEY'S PIECE ON THE *state of democracy in the House of* Representatives is right on target ("Oppressed Minority," June 23). But the situation is even worse than he reported. Democrats are shut out of the process, but so too are the rank-and-file Republicans of the House.

Full hearings are rarely held, the committee markup process is constrained or nonexistent, and few amendments are allowed on the floor. The result is that the ideas and expertise of almost all of the 435 Democrats and Republicans in the House of Representatives are silenced. Unless they are part of the Republican leadership, my colleagues across the aisle have almost as little input on bills as we Democrats do. At least we get to express our frustration; my Republican counterparts, while thrown a few more bones, must regularly rubberstamp leadership initiatives.

Democrats have consistently united behind a package of management reforms for the House. The proposal currently being considered endorses a return to the regular order of developing legislation, with hearings, sub- and full-committee markups, layover time to read bills before consideration, and a more open process for floor debate and amendments. Democrats also support specific bipartisan processes and a more professional schedule for the House.

As speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates, I sought to utilize the talents, experience, and interests of each elected member of the chamber. Legislation benefited from the many, varied ideas raised and debated. That process is a fundamental genius of the democratic system. Draconian control of the House has a high cost to the nation and our democratic principles.

BENJAMIN L. CARDIN
U.S. Representative
Chair, Democratic Caucus Committee on Organization, Study and Review
Washington, D.C.

A NEW LEAF

JASPER BECKER'S ARTICLE GIVES the wrong impression that the Chinese people's liberties started to be curtailed in modern times ("Mussolini Redux," June 23). The truth is that the Chinese have never had as much freedom as they do today, thanks to the Chinese governments since Deng Xiaoping. Yes, there are limitations to their political freedom, but these are a remnant of the past and not the result of a new policy. To call it fascism is inaccurate. China is not leaning toward war, and the Chinese people do not live under terror. They voice their opinions more and more, they are culturally creative, and they vibrantly interact with the outside world. Never before has China flourished as today, and its era of communism was overcome in an original, peaceful way that deserves celebration.

In the West, we should try to understand that China is searching for its own path toward modernity. China's newly created free-market society, which Becker describes very well, is a main step in that direction. A comparison between today's China and Benito Mussolini's Italy can dramatically catch the reader's attention, but it does not reflect reality. Perhaps a better comparison could be found in moderate Latin American regimes of the 1960s. Becker dismisses as "propaganda" that the Chinese are taught about the West's domination and about Japan's invasion of China. Are the Chinese not entitled to tell and to learn of their history of suffering? Why on earth should these invasions be hidden? Moreover, to claim that this teaching "instills a permanent resentment of foreigners" is misleading. China is not a xenophobic country, and foreigners are treated with warmth and open arms. Fascism? Could Becker have ever written this critical piece from Rome during Mussolini's reign?

GUSTAVO D. PEREDNIK
Director
The Ai Tian Program for Jewish Understanding in China
Jerusalem, Israel

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In a special advertising section summarizing a symposium on e-commerce, privacy, and spam e-mail that appeared in THE NEW REPUBLIC'S *June 9 issue, the following phrase was incorrectly attributed: "Speaking of it as I mean, that raises the classic, it's a slippery slope. I mean, if you're going to do that on e-mail, what are you—are you going to do that on direct mail, are you going to do it for billboards along the highway? I mean, all of these things are irritating to us—sometimes it's fear of what we might actually be seeing, but, you know, at 55 miles an hour you pass the billboard fairly quickly." The phrase was spoken by Gary Doernhoefer, vice president of Orbitz, not Ramsen Betfarhad, chief counsel of the House Commerce, Trade and Consumer Subcommittee.*

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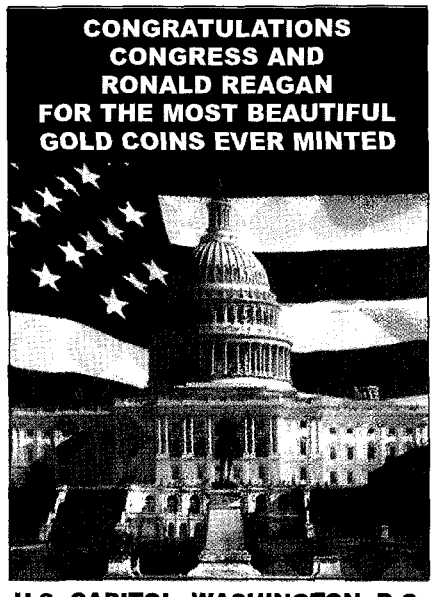

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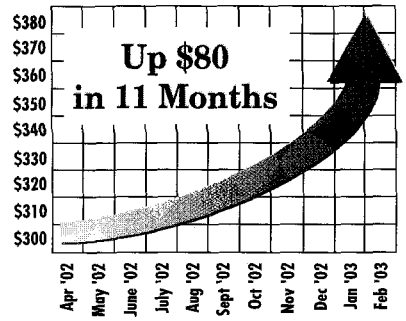

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Mistaken Identity

TRB
FROM WASHINGTON

CONSERVATIVES HAVE SPILLED a lot of ink in recent years denouncing two interrelated cultural trends. First, racial separatism—the abandonment of the civil rights ideal of integration; second, identity politics—the basing of political claims on racial, gender, or religious status.

Well, it's time for them to spill some more ink, because both trends are picking up steam—in the Republican Party.

Start with racial separatism. Around the time of the 1990 census, the GOP forged an unholy alliance with civil rights groups: Both would support an interpretation of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that forced states to create majority black (or Hispanic) congressional districts wherever possible. The result was more black members of Congress and more Republican members of Congress—since, stripped of their Democratic-leaning black constituents, many white Democratic congressmen fell to Republican challengers. GOP politicos were thrilled, but principled conservatives were disgusted. *The Weekly Standard* has called the arrangement, which eviscerated political interaction across the color line, "thoroughly repulsive." *National Review* wrote, "In another day, this was called 'segregation.' It was wrong then, and it's wrong now."

The good news is that, by the time the 2000 census came along, many black leaders agreed. Their motivations were largely partisan—they realized that handing the GOP a congressional majority hadn't exactly enhanced black political power. But the effects were salutary nonetheless. In Georgia, the state's black officials blessed—and the U.S. Supreme Court upheld—a redistricting plan that added racially mixed districts rather than overwhelmingly black and white ones.

But, while the NAACP now favors integrated districts, the White House and House Majority Leader Tom DeLay don't. In fact, in Texas they are pushing perhaps the most radical political segregation plan in recent memory. DeLay's effort to redistrict as many as eight Texas Democratic congressmen out of their jobs has sparked outrage, mostly because it violates the long-standing principle that states redistrict only once per decade. But equally scandalous is the *way* DeLay's map would produce an avalanche of new GOP seats. His plan would create an additional black majority district, an additional Hispanic majority district, and a sea of bleached-white districts that would likely vote Republican. As University of Houston political scientist Richard Murray told *The New York Times*, the "plan basically envisions all Democrats elected to Congress being either from Hispanic-majority or African-American majority districts."

Imagine that: a politically and racially segregated congressional slate from the largest state in the South. It's a recipe for Cynthia McKinneys and Jesse Helmses—politicians who demagogue to their racial bases without ever having to cross the color line in search of a vote. Karl Rove might think that's good for the Republican Party, but in the past conservatives have denounced such schemes as bad for the United States. And, yet, I haven't seen a single prominent conservative condemn the Texas plan. Are they waiting for it to pass first?

And the GOP hasn't only fallen in love with racial separatism; it has fallen in love with identity politics as well. Since President Bush took office, congressional Democrats have proved surprisingly effective in blocking his most conservative nominees to the federal courts. Beltway Republicans have searched for ways to pressure the Democrats to relent. And, increasingly, they have found one: Accuse them of bigotry.

It started with Miguel Estrada, the Honduran-born conservative Bush has nominated to the D.C. Court of Appeals. For more than a year now, Estrada's supporters have tried to focus his confirmation battle on ethnicity. Pennsylvania's Rick Santorum has called Democratic opposition "complete discrimination." Trent Lott has said, "They [Democrats] don't want Miguel Estrada because he's Hispanic," before exclaiming, "Viva Estrada."

The charge is absurd. Democrats aren't upset that Bush is trying to make the federal bench more Hispanic; they're upset that he's trying to make it more conservative. In fact, for years they've opposed hard-core conservatives of all genders and ethnicities—from Patricia Owen to Charles Pickering to Clarence Thomas. Whatever you think about Democratic objections to Republican judicial nominees, they're based on ideology. It is President Bush's GOP that is trying to make the Estrada fight about identity instead.

And now it's doing the same thing with hard-right Alabama federal court nominee William Pryor Jr. Pryor is white and male. But the GOP has grown increasingly creative. And so, during his nomination battle, Judiciary Chairman Orrin Hatch—over Democratic objections—asked Pryor his religion. Turns out he's Catholic. Democrats on the committee showed zero interest in the subject—instead hammering Pryor for his positions on abortion, gay rights, and various ethical issues. But that hasn't stopped a political action committee with close White House ties from running ads in two heavily Catholic states charging, "Some in the U.S. Senate are attacking Bill Pryor for having 'deeply held' Catholic beliefs." Hatch and fellow Judiciary Committee Republican Jeff Sessions have echoed the charge.

A three-year-old could see the logical fallacy here. Democrats dislike Pryor's views on abortion and gay rights—they don't care whether he came to those views through Catholicism, Judaism, or by reading Edmund Burke. As it happens, almost half the Democrats on the Judiciary Committee who voted against Pryor's nomination *are themselves Catholic*.

The GOP argument seems to be that, if someone says his political views are rooted in his religion, opposing those political views makes you a religious bigot. That happens to be almost exactly the same argument Al Sharpton used to make. Since his political views stemmed from his racial experience, your opposition to them made you a racist.

Conservatives, as I remember, disliked it when Sharpton employed that tactic. And they loudly denounced civil rights groups when they embraced segregated redistricting. But what happens when the culprits are Hatch and DeLay? So far, not much. The Bush White House seems willing to sell out supposedly cherished conservative principles for partisan gain. Will conservatives even try to stop them?

PETER BEINART

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Money Talks

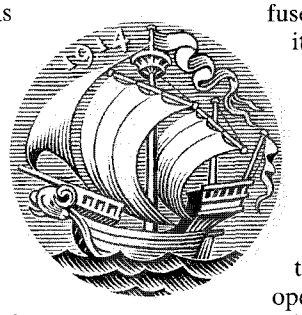
LAST MONTH, WHEN the White House announced that the budget deficit would once again dramatically exceed its previously announced expectations, the Bush spinners had their talking points prepared. "The president's highest priorities will always be winning the war on terrorism, protecting the American people, and getting our economy growing stronger and faster, and that's where his focus is," announced Press Secretary Scott McClellan. "Restoring a balanced budget is an important priority for this administration,"

said White House Budget Director Josh Bolten, "but a balanced budget is not a higher priority than winning the global war on terror, protecting the American homeland, or restoring economic growth and job creation."

But, last week, the White House showed just how odd its definition of "highest priorities" is. In a depressingly familiar ritual, Senate Republicans, acting on President Bush's behalf, voted down a Democratic amendment to increase homeland security spending by nearly $2 billion. The defeated amendment would have provided more funding for seaports, border security, the protection of chemical plants, and other aspects of homeland security that independent experts have said urgently need more resources. Senator Thad Cochran explained the GOP position thusly: There is "no end to the list of ways we could spend additional funds on homeland security." It's unclear why this strikes Cochran as a persuasive argument against more homeland security spending. In any case, it's hardly true that Democrats, or anybody else, are demanding infinite resources for homeland security. Even one of the more generous congressional proposals, by Senator Joe Lieberman, would leave homeland security spending at about one-fifth of the $300 billion drained away by the Bush tax cuts by 2004.

Bush's calculation seems to be that more homeland security spending would inflate the deficit, whose enormous growth is already causing the White House political problems and imperiling future tax cuts. As a result, he has created a situation in which any effort to ramp up one initiative in the war on terrorism cannot be accomplished without taking funding from others.

This state of affairs was nicely illustrated this week when the White House announced it would provide an additional $1 billion to rebuild Afghanistan. *The Washington Post*, which first reported this plan, noted in an aside that the money would be "shifted from existing foreign and military aid accounts so as not to increase the deficit." In the context of a total annual foreign and military aid budget of only $15 billion, $1 billion in cuts is a significant sum. Bush, mind you, is not contending that he has uncovered $1 billion of waste in foreign aid accounts just after a well-publicized report by the Council on Foreign Relations charged that Afghanistan's reconstruction might be going awry. No, he is cutting money because he does not want to increase the deficit by $1 billion, though his own tax cuts have increased the deficit by roughly 2,000 times that amount.



Stealing money from one anti-terrorism program to fund another is a dangerous business. An urgent Transportation Security Administration (TSA) memo obtained by *The Washington Post* this week reported a new threat of hijackers planning suicide missions. Yet the Transportation Security Administration is now being forced to trim its operations to comply with tight budgets. Similarly, taking money from other foreign aid programs, which are presumably themselves connected to the war on terrorism, may well hurt counterterror efforts in those countries and ultimately make the United States more vulnerable.

These trade-offs will only grow worse as the Bush administration begins paying for military operations in Iraq. The administration refuses to provide funding in its 2004 budget for Iraq operations. Perhaps that's because to do so would broach the question of where the money would come from, since the White House won't delay any tax cuts. Though Iraq operations will cost at least $48 billion per year, at hearings in Congress Bolten insisted he couldn't offer even a placeholder number for Iraq costs "because we don't know what they will be." But we do know one thing: Whatever it spends on Iraq, the administration has already shown that the war on terrorism is hardly its top priority. ■

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NOTEBOOK

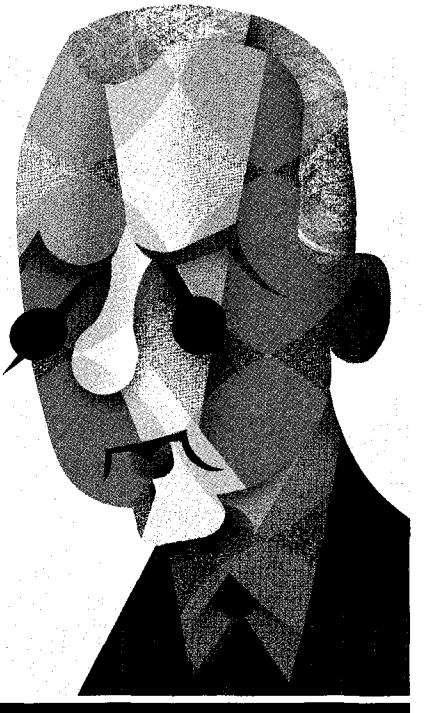
HATCH REVERSES HIS STAND . . . LEWIS DEVALUES HIS STORY

ESCAPE HATCH

IT'S NO SECRET THAT, IN THE BUSH era, congressional Republicans haven't always lived up to the ethical standards they demanded when they were in the minority. (The GOP leadership has done an about-face on rules outlawing gifts from lobbyists, for instance, and on term limits for committee chairmen.) But usually they've been able to gin up at least some rationalization to deflect charges of rank hypocrisy. Not Orrin Hatch. As ranking Republican on the Judiciary Committee during the Clinton years, one of Hatch's favorite tricks was a rule that stipulates that, if a committee member objects to bringing a matter to vote, debate can only be terminated if at least ten committee members vote to do so, and one of those ten must be from the minority party. Hatch and his fellow Judiciary Committee Republicans used that rule to prevent a number of Clinton's judicial nominees from receiving a committee vote by simply refusing to terminate debate. But, last week, when Democrats sought to invoke the rule to prevent the Judiciary Committee from voting on the nomination of Alabama Attorney General Bill Pryor to the federal bench, Hatch wouldn't allow it. As he interpreted the rule, he said, debate could be terminated with any ten votes, *even if they all came from members of the majority party*. When Vermont Democrat Patrick Leahy pointed out that Hatch had argued just the opposite only a few years earlier, the Utah senator responded, "And I apparently was wrong back then when I made that argument." How big of him to admit his mistake.

UNCIVIL

IN A CONGRESS COMPOSED LARGELY of mediocre lawyers, slick businessmen, and at least one well-known exterminator, John Lewis stands out as a man with a special moral authority. The Georgia Democrat, who still bears scars from



Orrin Hatch

the beatings he received during a 1965 march in Selma, is one of precious few civil rights champions to hold a significant elective office. As Sean Wilentz wrote in these pages in 1996, "It is Lewis's extraordinary personal aura and his moral consistency that commands respect." Unfortunately, Lewis has a penchant for devaluing that authority by absurdly comparing his earlier heroic struggles to Capitol Hill's partisan fights. The latest example occurred last week, after Republican Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas sought to have the U.S. Capitol Police evict a group of Democrats, who had walked out of a hearing in protest, from an adjacent library. Outrageous? Sure. But hardly deserving of this extended Lewis analogy: "In another period of time, . . . some of us stood up to Bull Connor in Birmingham, Alabama, and we stood up to Sheriff Clark in Selma, Alabama. And I must say to the chairman of this committee, we will not be intimidated. We will not be immobilized." But, if John Lewis doesn't stop exploiting his own experience, he may politically immobilize himself.

DOMINO THEORY

AS HASSAN FATTAH REPORTED IN these pages ("Flash Point," June 30), muzzling the media has become a common practice of the American administrators running Iraq, where L. Paul Bremer announced he would ban publications that "incite violence," a phrase he has defined broadly. And now, in a strange inverse of stated policy, the Bush administration seems to be trying to export this particularly illiberal tendency to the rest of the region. Stopping by "Fox News Sunday" for an interview with Brit Hume after touring Iraq last week, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz complained vociferously about Al Jazeera's "false reporting and very biased reporting." More specifically, he was irate that it spuriously claimed American troops had detained an imam in the holy city of Najaf. When Hume pressed him further on the subject, Wolfowitz admitted, "We're talking to the owners of those stations and asking for some balance in their coverage." And who are the "owners" of Al Jazeera? The Qatari government, which has made a policy of never intervening in editorial matters. Al Jazeera's reporting is, of course, biased—even ideologically frightening—but the presence of an independent network in a region where media have traditionally been controlled by governments represents a significant step away from dictatorship. Now, by Wolfowitz's own account, the U.S. government has asked the Qataris to retreat from their commitment to an independent press. According to Wolfowitz, the Qatari government is not giving the Bush administration what it wants—yet. "So far, I think the answer we're getting is that those broadcasts are continuing, and that's not satisfactory," Wolfowitz said, implying that more

DAVID COWLES

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pressure may be forthcoming. While in Iraq, Wolfowitz riffed Chancy Gardner–like on liberal democracy: "Democracy grows like a garden. If you . . . water the plants and you're patient, eventually you get something magnificent." Unfortunately, it seems that Wolfowitz left his watering can at home.

OFF THE RESERVATION

When House Majority Leader Tom DeLay laid out his vision of Middle East peace in a speech to the Israeli Knesset this week, his words were widely interpreted as a critique of a Bush administration policy he has previously called too demanding of Israel. He implicitly reiterated that point in Jerusalem by concentrating on the need "for a Palestinian government to uproot terror" and saying almost nothing about Israeli concessions. We don't begrudge DeLay his views. But we can't help but wonder what he would say if a *Democrat* had gone to a foreign country and undermined U.S. diplomacy at a critical moment—in this case, a day after Bush had met with Ariel Sharon in Washington. Well, come to think of it, we probably *do* know what he'd say—something like his response to Bill Clinton's semi-apology for slavery, issued during a 1998 trip to Uganda: "[H]e's apologizing for the actions of the United States," DeLay fumed. "It just offends me that the president of the United States is, directly or indirectly, attacking his own country in a foreign land. It just amazes me." No, DeLay isn't the president. But somehow we suspect he wouldn't note that distinction if the speaker in Jerusalem this week had been named Tom Daschle.

AND THE CORRECT NUMBER IS?

"Ironically, all sides agree that the Christ-killer libel hurled at too many Jews by too many Christians over the centuries is a perversion of the Gospels."—*The Wall Street Journal* editorial page, July 25

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Helen Vendler's review of Robert Lowell's *Collected Poems* ("The Hurt Soul," July 28 & August 4) mistakenly stated that Jean Stafford had died by the time of Lowell's funeral, in 1977. Stafford died in 1979, two years after Lowell. We regret the error.

Also, Peter Beinart's "No Answer" column (TRB, July 21) incorrectly stated that the five-part Congo series produced by ABC's "Nightline" aired in September 2001. It was actually broadcast in January 2002, having been postponed due to the network's September 11 coverage.

And finally, the print date of our July 28 & August 4 issue, which appears in the shaded box in Correspondence, was incorrect. It should have been July 17. ■

Inside the Box | Bruce Reed

BREAKING AWAY Lance Armstrong wins fifth straight Tour de France. Bush: "The French will do anything to make a Texan wear yellow."

SAUD OFF Bush says declassifying 9/11 report "would help the enemy": "Over the past month, I think we've helped Democrats enough!"

SOB STORY GOP Representative Bill Thomas makes tearful apology for trying to have House Democrats arrested: "It should be enough for us that you're bound and gagged."

HANDY MAN James Baker turns down offer to oversee Iraq. Reaction from 41: "But he's the only one in the family who has run a losing campaign."

LIVING HISTORY Bush sets new record with $455 billion budget deficit. Bolten: "Just because Hillary paid back her advance doesn't mean we have to!"

FALL GUY Tenet may leave CIA to run for Congress: "I like jobs where the president gets to blame me for everything."

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON Scientists discover genetic marker for depression: "We already knew from studying the Bushes that there's a gene for recessions."

ORDINARY PEOPLE Arianna and Michael Huffington both consider running for California governor: "We don't really care about the state—we just don't want the other to get custody."

LANCE ARMSTRONG: REUTERS PHOTO ARCHIVE; ARIANNA HUFFINGTON: STAR MAX PHOTOS.

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Campaign Journal
Makeover

BY RYAN LIZZA

NASHUA, NEW HAMPSHIRE

IF YOU BELIEVE the mythology surrounding John Edwards, this should be the moment where he makes someone cry. About 100 people have come to Greeley Park on a cloudy Sunday to listen to the North Carolina senator, and an elderly, hunched-over man named Donald High, who has trouble walking, has risen to ask Edwards a question.

A similar visit to a New Hampshire belt factory back in February became legendary among the senator's aides when workers were left practically weeping. So, when High asks what Edwards will do about the fact that "people are getting laid off in this country by the thousands" while "there are still all these imports coming in destroying the quality of the goods in this country," I'm not the only one expecting a response of Clintonian empathy from the famously smooth ex–trial lawyer. Instead, Edwards launches into a detailed riff about tax incentives. He goes on at length about how we can replace the jobs that have already left with "economic revitalization zones" and a new "national venture capital fund," both of which would help attract entrepreneurs and businesses to hard-hit areas of the country. John Edwards—the guy with the pretty face and light resumé who was expected to compensate for his lack of policy acumen with a compelling biography and an uncanny ability to connect with voters—has become a wonk.

Edwards spent the first half of the year largely focused on raising money, and he now barely tops Carol Moseley Braun in most polls. But, for months, his advisers have cautioned that it is all part of the plan. "We've been operating under this quaint theory that the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary take place in January, and we've calibrated our strategy accordingly," says David Axelrod, one of Edwards's top advisers. The town-hall-style meeting in Nashua is just one in a long series of late summer stops in Iowa and New Hampshire to finally introduce the senator to the voters. But, while this tour has long been anticipated, what wasn't foreseen was the metamorphosis that has accompanied it. Whereas the old Edwards often replied to queries with Southern-accented platitudes, the new Edwards spews statistics and answers voters' questions with a sometimes overwhelming arsenal of specific proposals. Indeed, while the media have focused on the improbable success of Howard Dean, over the last few months Edwards has developed perhaps the most detailed and coherent domestic agenda of any of the Democratic candidates.

BILL CLINTON, WHO is close to Edwards, talks about a candidate needing what he calls "the theory of the case," or "the meta-message"—an organizing theme around which all of a candidate's specific proposals can be built. When Edwards started campaigning earlier this year, his message revolved around the simple idea that he would represent "regular Americans" shut out of the Bush administration by a president whose own privileged background left him unable to understand the problems of ordinary folks. As the son of a mill worker who was the first member of his family to go to college, Edwards told audiences, he was the Democrat best-suited to take this fight to President Bush. It was candidacy as biography. But, somewhere along the way, Edwards and his aides realized this wasn't going to be enough. "Every campaign faces the temptation of running on biography and persona, but he's better off not running on it," says a senior adviser. "That makes his background a much more powerful tool, if it's not the only one in his arsenal."

As Edwards developed his policy portfolio during the spring and early summer, he tried to use his biography and his initial, populist critique of Bush as the spine that held together his nascent policy proposals. His signature issue was "College for Everyone," a plan to provide students free tuition for their first year at a state or community college in exchange for ten hours of work per week. But, while that proposal served as a handy reminder of Edwards's own background, the rest of his agenda still seemed like a hodgepodge of small ideas lacking vision. He unveiled a plan for rural America, proposed turning biomass into clean energy, and talked about the Patients Bill of Rights and making prescription drugs more affordable. Not exactly a meta-message.

But, in June and July, as the Dean phenomenon peaked and as Edwards stepped up his campaign schedule in Iowa and New Hampshire, he made three of the most thoughtful, politically savvy speeches of the campaign to date. Start with the introduction of his tax plan, in which he laid out the updated theme of his campaign with a quotation from Andrew Jackson: "Equal opportunity for all; special privileges for none." Rather than taking the White House's bait and calling for a repeal of all the Bush tax cuts—which include hundreds of billions of dollars in lower- and middle-income reductions that even liberal Democrats supported—Edwards called for eliminating the cuts for the top 2 percent of Americans and raising the capital gains tax to 25 percent, positioning himself as the defender of middle-class interests against both the right and the left. He challenged Bush to explain why the middle class should pay higher taxes on their earned income than the wealthy pay on their investment income, while asking Democrats such as Dean and Dick Gephardt to justify taking away recent tax cuts from working-class families.

His subsequent speeches on corporate responsibility and health care continued the same message of rewarding work rather than wealth and demanding responsibility in

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return for government assistance. In case anyone missed the point, he used the word "responsibility" 28 times in his health care speech, which called for mandating insurance for children while emphasizing cost control and federal-budget discipline. The meta-message of the three speeches is that Edwards is the defender of democratic capitalism while Bush is simply the defender of wealth. It's a populist critique of Bush as a crony capitalist coupled with a detailed and optimistic plan to level the playing field for those regular Americans Edwards started the campaign talking about. "Edwards has put together an agenda," argues an adviser, "to go to the middle class and make the middle class richer, which is Bush's worst nightmare, since that's what he promised to do but hasn't. I hate to put labels on it, but it's a kind of 'positive populism' with echoes of Clinton in '92, but one he came to on his own."

However he came to it, the Clinton echoes are loud. Clinton, in his 1992 campaign manifesto, *Putting People First*, talked about "providing opportunity, taking responsibility, rewarding work." In his tax speech, Edwards said he wanted the campaign to be a debate about the values of "opportunity, responsibility, hard work." Just as Clinton declared, "Our policies are neither liberal nor conservative, neither Democratic nor Republican," Edwards now argues that "American politics has been stuck in the grip of two competing and unsatisfactory theories." Where Clinton railed that the "average CEO at a major American corporation ... is paid about one hundred times more than the average worker," Edwards explains, "We live in an America where, over the last thirty years, working people's pay has gone up ten percent. CEO pay has gone up three thousand percent!" And so on.

Moreover, like Clinton, Edwards has realized that anger alone won't defeat Bush. In 1992, Clinton was careful to note, "We're not going to get positive change just by Bush-bashing." Instead, he laid out a detailed plan "of confronting the real problems of real people." Similarly, an Edwards adviser says, "Most of the campaigns, especially Dean, have focused on what they're against. The Edwards campaign has done the most to figure out what they're for." (One adviser argues that this is partly why uber-media strategist Robert Shrum eventually fled to the John Kerry camp: "One of the reasons Shrum left is that Edwards doesn't fit the Shrum mold. He's an optimist. He's not a partisan. And he just doesn't feel comfortable giving the same old Democratic speech.")

Finally, like Clinton in 1992, Edwards has established himself as the candidate of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), although he has no interest in pigeonholing himself with that label. TNR contributor Bruce Reed, who served as Clinton's domestic policy adviser before becoming president of the DLC, is an influential Edwards adviser who helped shape the three recent speeches. And, while Edwards was stumping in New Hampshire over the weekend, Reed was hosting a meeting of New Democrats in Philadelphia, where he released the DLC's "New Agenda for the Next Decade," a document filled with policies that Edwards now talks about on the stump, including the creation of a new domestic intelligence agency; tax proposals to help the middle class buy a home, pay for college, and save for retirement; a plan to "stop the scandal of excessive CEO pay"; support for after-school programs; and an attack on corporate welfare.

CAN HIS NEW policy heft transform Edwards into the potent candidate many long expected him to be? He always had retail skills and fund-raising ability. Now he has synthesized a compelling biography with a coherent big-picture message and a detailed domestic agenda, too.

But there are still plenty of doubts. Edwards's critics argue that he can't break out. They point to the relatively small number of undecided voters registering in polls in Iowa and New Hampshire and argue that it's simply too late for him to secure a base of voters. Axelrod thinks that's nonsense. "Most people haven't even begun to focus on this," he says. "One of the polls I saw recently in Iowa said that eighty to ninety percent of the people said they could change their commitment." The plan is to start spending money on ads to introduce Edwards, who in the most recent Zogby poll of primary voters nationwide had an "unfamiliar" rating of 67 percent, the highest of all the candidates save Dennis Kucinich. Axelrod concedes this means the campaign will have to go on the air soon: "Because of the name-recognition deficit, we're going to have to communicate earlier than some of the other candidates." Finally, however effective his vision on domestic issues, Edwards has yet to put together a meta-message on national security. So far, Edwards has positions—pro–Iraq war, pro–intervention in Liberia, anti-unilateralism, etc.—but no overarching theme.

For what it's worth, at five events I attended in New Hampshire over two days, voters seemed impressed. In Nashua, the first voter to speak after Edwards delivered his stump speech began by declaring, "I'm convinced you're the only candidate who can beat Bush." A swooning Elizabeth Pelletier, an older woman from Nashua, told me she came to the meeting undecided but was now won over because the senator reminded her of Robert F. Kennedy. Yet another woman approached the senator after the meeting broke up and told him, "I brought my six children here to show them how awful politicians are, but I'm leaving impressed." She asked for a picture with all her kids and the senator. I thought for sure the last person to ask a question that day was a campaign plant. Robert Vaughn rose and explained that he can't afford to send his kids to college, that he hates paying the tax burden for the wealthy, and that he's sick of pols owned by lobbyists—three of Edwards's top issues. After the speech, he walked up to the senator, gave him a sturdy handshake, and looked him in the eyes. "I'm voting for you," he said. He was even choking up a little bit, as if he was about to cry. ■

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America's post-Saddam triumph.

Without Sin

BY MARTIN PERETZ

KOFI ANNAN RECENTLY said, apropos Iraq, that "democracy should not be imposed from outside." Others have said the same thing. But do the critics of U.S.- and U.K.-sponsored regime change in Baghdad actually believe Iraq would have come to democracy on its own? Maybe so. (In which case, their cheerful assumptions about Arab society now hang only on Palestine.) After all, the Arab world has never experienced an indigenous democratic revolution. And the history of Iraq is among the bloodiest of the Arab narratives. It includes inter-sectarian and interethnic hatreds of ancient lineage and constant re-fertilization, extermination of particular populations, random carnage, suffocation of cultures, systematic torture, a boot—as George Orwell put it with reference to Stalinism—stamping on a human face forever. The brothers Uday and Qusay Hussein incarnated this endless brutality; indeed, they were the ghosts of its future. Now that specter has finally passed.

The United States has not yet found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. But we have found at least 62 mass graves, filled with decayed corpses, thousands of them mowed down on the spot and buried, victims of Saddam Hussein's relentless war against the majority Shia—reason enough to have taken out the tyrant and feel gratified at having done so. These are the Babi Yars of our time, the Katyn Forests, the Cambodian killing fields.

They are not auspicious settings for democracy or even genuine national reconstruction. But that just makes the president all the more brave for having taken on exactly the kind of nation-building he abjured during the campaign. Yes, the Bush administration has made mistakes. The sad thing about the uranium scandal is that the case for this war did not need the help of untruths. But who really thinks it is the Bush administration's lies that offend France and Russia? What offends them, surely, are America's truths—particularly, its belief in the possibility of using force for democratic good. As for the United Nations, such values do not appear in its portfolio at all, which is committed by the charter to the protection of established states, whether they persecute their populations or not. That's what the diplomatists mean when they utter the sacred phrase "territorial integrity" and apply it to contrived polities. Look at an atlas: Those countries demarked by more or less straight lines are the joint creations of imperial intriguers and corrupt, decolonizing elites.

The U.S. military has been exemplary in the care it has given to the practical human needs of the Iraqi population. This may be attributed—and not whimsically—to what we used to call the American national character, a certain down-to-earth kindness, instinctive practicality, comfort with diversity. There are no epidemics in Iraq and no hunger either. Comparisons to postwar conditions in occupied Germany and Japan (or even Italy) are rather flattering to the present. The widespread faultfinding with the administration's pre-occupation planning seems to assume these ventures can be micromanaged in advance. They can't, and, whatever the route, America's end goal is clear: Iraqi democracy. No occupation in history has been as scrupulous in putting together a provisional government so reflective of the country's population and ideological spread. The head of the Communist Party is among the 25 members of Iraq's new Governing Council. Even more remarkably, so are various anti-democratic Shia clerics, some of them none too supportive of the United States and Britain.

Were the United Nations running Iraq (or even helping run it) and the French, Russians, and Egyptians playing major roles, post-Saddam Iraq would likely be less orderly and less decent. After all, many European and Arab opponents of the war seem to associate Iraqi "stability" with continued Baathist—or at least Sunni—rule. This would, in reality, be no stability at all. It would also be a death sentence for Iraqi democracy, since it would exclude the majority Shia. The State Department has also shown an affinity for prolonged Sunni rule. In fact, many prominent advisers of the elder President Bush showed an affinity for prolonged rule by Saddam. George W. has admirably emancipated himself from his father's delusions. This war is rightly seen as the corrective to Baker's colossal mistake of leaving Saddam in power in 1991.

I HOPE THE United States sends troops to save Liberia. But one has to wonder: Why are the United Nations, the Europeans, and even the Africans—who otherwise view the United States as an imperialist hegemon that needs restraining—so eager for the United States to go in? Because they don't trust anyone else, including themselves, to effectively do the job. They have seen our handiwork in Iraq. And they know it is what Liberia desperately needs. In the aftermath of that war, America's sway in the world has never been greater, and that is a salutary development for peace, material progress, and freedom. In Europe, the former Warsaw Pact countries are coming into their own, in some measure because they have chosen to be allies of the United States. Poland is not a lesser country than Belgium or Sweden, and it has more of a sense of nationhood than either. The Easterners have also put a crimp in the mindless and undemocratic surge to one technological and bureaucratic Europe, in which nobody, as it happens, really thinks himself a European. Our movement of troops and bases eastward, closer to the troubled areas where they would likely be deployed, supports this current. It is also realistic. Austria forbade our movement of troops from Germany by rail toward Iraq. A world in which Washington, having ensured the peace of Europe for decades, has to pro-

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pitiate Vienna—with its catastrophic decline in population growth rates, an index of its decline in everything else—is not a realistic or prudent world.

America's relationships with the English-speaking democracies are also deepening. Add to Great Britain and Australia India, whose internal and external strains have kept it from participating in the Iraqi venture but is allying itself with the United States and its friends nonetheless. Symbolically, India's growing ties with Israel are the most sonorous because they reflect its emergence from the fictional cuckoo-land of the non-aligned. This escape from delusion is even being played out—more tentatively, to be sure—in Pakistan, which has begun debating whether to recognize Israel. Can anybody imagine these developments shorn of the coalition's intervention against Iraq?

The uprising in Iran must also be seen through the Iraqi prism. Not that opposition to the mullahs depended on America's war: The turmoil in Iran is indigenous and deep-rooted. But its success was until recently limited by its neighborhood. Would Saddam have stood by while Tehran reopened ties to Washington and Jerusalem? And, surely, the promise of liberalism across the border emboldens Iran's democratic revolutionaries.

America's relationship with Germany is also being refreshed after the Iraq war. Berlin's foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, has made it clear to everyone who will listen that, despite Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's personal animosity to the Bush administration, Germany is not about to join France in a doomed anti-American cabal. Both the Fischer wing of the government and the Christian Democratic opposition yearn to reestablish the historic alliance that made Germany a democracy and a trusted member of the Western coalition. Germany's rite of passage came when it participated confidently and unapologetically in the humanitarian use of military power to defend Kosovo against a lesser Saddam. Don't count Germany on the other side. Nor Japan, which will send 1,000 combat engineers to Iraq, the first deployment of its forces anywhere in 58 years, accomplished without sanction from the United Nations or assent from China.

THE ARAB STREET will rise, warned the naysayers; the United States will be without friends and without influence in the Middle East. Well, the Arab street did not rise, and America's influence has never been stronger. Look at Aqaba, where Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas met in public to certify their travels on the road map. President Bush presided. But no one from the United Nations, the European Union, or Russia was in attendance. Their presence would have been inappropriate. After all, they have not produced a single concession from the Palestinians, ever. They are not actors in the Israeli-Palestinian drama but shadow actors. And now the United States has overthrown the dictator who cast his own shadow over the Arab world. With Saddam's end, his longtime comrade Yasir Arafat is finally sidetracked (a belated recognition that Sharon was right about him all along).

To be sure, Arafat still receives official Swedish, French, and Belgian visitors. And he still conspires against the man forced on him as Palestinian prime minister. He is also conspiring against the road map: A July 23 dispatch in *The Boston Globe* details Arafat's ongoing payments to Fatah's own Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, certified by the United States as a terrorist group, and other paramilitary units that have not accepted the current cease-fire. These militias control two large Palestinian cities, Jenin and Nablus. According to the *Globe*, Jenin's governor, an Abbas ally, "was abducted from his home, ... publicly beaten, marched barefoot through the Jenin refugee camp, and thrown into a cave, where he was beaten again." The governor has now resigned, a victory for the enemies of peace. Similar incidents are occurring daily elsewhere. This is really a civil war in the making.

Nothing, then, guarantees that the road map will lead anywhere. Still, the progress that has been made is attributable to three things: Israel's resilience in its long struggle with terror, widespread Palestinian dismay with their situation after nearly three years of self-destructive intifada, and America's willingness to go it almost alone in Iraq. The progress will only continue if Abbas wants to live in the real world and temper his demands accordingly. Maybe his internal enemies won't let him live there. He must become stronger and they weaker, and Israel can help him. But it cannot save him. In any case, his current demands are both unrealistic and counterintuitive. Despite his pledge as part of the road map to quash Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other recalcitrant terrorist groups, Abbas has refused even to begin disarming them. This is a danger not only to Israel but to his own government. A few terrorist incidents—or one big one—and the road map will be over. Israel still has no reason to trust either the intentions of Palestinian fanatics or the will and ability of Palestinian moderates to stop them. Which is why it is building the elaborate and psychologically depressing fence that President Bush ever so coyly calls a "problem." But the real problem is that Israel still needs to protect its own population from random murder. When there is sustained and sustainable quiet, the fence can be taken down.

On releasing prisoners, the dynamic is the same. In the real world, prisoners are not released until their polity is at peace with those they have designated as enemies. The United States has already pressed Israel to release more prisoners than most Israelis consider prudent to let go. Some of these captives may by now be harmless. But the harmless ones are not whom the Palestinians crave. Just a few freed prisoners who return to their old line of work could destroy Bush's best-laid plans. No matter, say the inveterate peace-processors: Israel must make more (and more) accommodations. The rationale for such Israeli concessions—even those, such as prisoners, that are not mentioned in the road map—is confidence-building, the cliché that demonstrates goodwill in a tight spot but hardly ever

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works. Besides, it is the Israelis who require confidence; after years of being targeted by terror, it is their trust that has to be built. The improvisation of ad hoc and unreciprocated bargains gives signed agreements a bad name in a neighborhood where they have never had a good one. Confidence-building is the lingua franca of peace-pretenders, such as those who wanted to keep Saddam in power and pretended nothing good would come from his removal.

George W. Bush will need to remember the lessons he learned in Iraq so as not to lose the opportunities he now has in the land where many of mankind's deepest convictions were born. This is his real test. ■

Baghdad Dispatch

Random Death

BY HASSAN FATTAH

LAST WEEK, AFTER U.S. forces killed Saddam Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay, American military leaders and Bush administration civilians hailed the event as a key step toward quelling the daily attacks against American soldiers. American officials, such as General John Abizaid, the head of Central Command, finally acknowledged this month that troops in Iraq were facing an increasingly organized "guerrilla-type campaign" orchestrated by Saddam loyalists who wanted to return the former regime to power. Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, commander of ground forces in Iraq, had said, "The war we're fighting here is against former regime loyalists." Not surprisingly, on the Sunday talk shows, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz suggested the deaths of Saddam's sons would show that Saddam's regime is never going to return, demoralizing people plotting violence.

But the same week Uday and Qusay were killed, a new Islamist group, called the Army of the Islamic Jihad—based in Baghdad, dedicated to ridding Iraq of U.S. forces, and having no ties to the former regime—announced their presence in a taped interview. In the area near Falluja, a group of tribe members unconnected to either Saddam's regime or to the Army of the Islamic Jihad announced they would be starting a movement to attack Americans. And several other small groups of resistance fighters unconnected to each other popped up as well, ambushing American soldiers or broadcasting their violent intentions on Arabic satellite networks. It seems as if a new anti-American group is popping up every day. None of these groups appear to be coordinating with each other or with any of Saddam's former top lieutenants. And none show a desire to see Saddam return. All of which suggests that the deaths of Uday and Qusay may have less impact than Wolfowitz predicted. Worse, since the anti-U.S. attacks are less coordinated than some American officials believe, they could prove even harder to stop.

Hassan Fattah is a frequent TNR *contributor based in Baghdad.*

THOUGH USUALLY ONLY deadly attacks get reported in the U.S. papers, each day brings about 15 to 20 attempted incidents of violence against American troops. And though the top brass talk of organized resistance, lower-ranking American officers are aware that the attacks are diffuse and uncoordinated. One officer told me, "What we have on the ground are lots of small groups conducting small ambushes."

The attacks are being committed by three broad categories of guerrillas, none with close ties to Saddam. Some of the violence is being led by low-ranking former Baathists. Amer Al Amiri, a Tikrit-based researcher, says numerous former Baathists have created their own small brigades of armed men and are targeting American soldiers. Amiri says that, on July 17, he witnessed members of one of these brigades pour into Tikrit from another town where they'd been hiding. In Tikrit, he says, one of their gunmen hit a local U.S. base with rocket-propelled grenades, and other members of the brigade have begun arming themselves.

But these former Baathists are not attacking U.S. forces to bring Saddam back: They are on the warpath largely for revenge or to boost their own power. "They are gangs, and they have money," Amiri says, suggesting that many of the Baathists are trying to stake out positions for themselves as local leaders in a new Iraq. Some want to scare off U.S. soldiers, while others are simply interested in killing Americans—who may have killed friends or members of their families in the war—or find the occupying forces insulting to them.

Other political analysts say tribal chiefs, independently of the former Baathists, are also organizing violence. Many of these tribesmen are based in the Anbar region of western Iraq, which included Falluja, though some are even in Baghdad. One American officer told me the tribesmen have become violent in response to what they see as assaults on their dignity by occupying troops who have invaded their homes. What's more, some chiefs are instigating violence because their tribal codes hold they must kill anyone who killed a member of their tribe.

Indeed, I recently met two tribesmen, whose faces were covered to protect their identities and who claimed to have been involved in attacks on American soldiers. Both said they were not fighting to bring the Baath Party back but because the Americans had insulted their dignity, and both warned that a growing number of tribesmen were taking up arms. I also met a tribal leader in Baghdad whose son was killed by an American sniper in an accident in late June. The tribe is now calling for his death to be avenged. "We de-

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mand ten of them for every one of ours," the boy's father warned. "That is our tribal custom." "If the Americans don't change their ways, these things [revenge killings against Americans] will start to get more frequent," warned Emir Rabia Mohammad Al Habib, the leader of one tribe. "This all portends some very dangerous times ahead."

Islamists also have been behind attacks and may be the most worrisome opponents for the U.S. forces. "Islamists, especially from the west [of Iraq], ... are getting involved" in the killing, says Sadoun Dulaimi, head of the Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies, a research organization created since the fall of Saddam. Resentful Islamists "have begun to act either individually or in small groups against American forces. ... They are dangerous because they are people who will fight at any cost." The Islamists, political analysts say, want to use violence to force the Americans out and even to set up an Islamist state, but they have no love for the Baath Party and no ties to the tribal leaders.

The best known of these violent Islamists is Mohammed's Army, a small group that formed more than a month ago and has claimed responsibility for several attacks. In the past month, several other shadowy Islamist groups also have emerged, including the Islamic Armed Group, which has gone on Arab satellite television to tout its attacks; the Mehdi Army, the "peaceful" militia controlled by anti-U.S. Shia cleric Moktada Al Sadr; and the Iraq Liberation Army, which claimed responsibility for the assassination of the U.S.-appointed mayor of Hadithah and has warned that it will exact retribution from soldiers of other countries that join U.S. peacekeeping in Iraq.

THOUGH SOME LEADERS of the U.S. forces here have been celebrating the deaths of Uday and Qusay, the variety and diversity of the groups launching attacks should give them pause. "It only makes sense that the more of these guys there are, the harder it is to stop them," Dulaimi warns. "No intelligence can help you" when there is virtually no organizing principle drawing together random groups of attackers, he says. And, if these groups continue cutting down Americans, they may encourage others with grievances—tribal leaders who so far have remained quiet, individuals who feel wronged by U.S. forces, and others—to strike back.

Dulaimi and other Iraqi political analysts believe that, because there is no one leadership of the resistance to strike against, military operations by the U.S. forces may be of limited value. Instead, he says, the American soldiers need to not only identify and eliminate resistance fighters but also work to rebuild local institutions and develop a greater understanding of local culture.

Some American troops have already started down this path. As *The Washington Post* reported this week, in Falluja, some American officers have delivered formal apologies to local tribal leaders for offenses committed by American soldiers, have paid money to the families of noncombatants killed, have ordered soldiers to knock on doors before conducting most residential searches, and have begun building local institutions, starting with the local police force. "It comes down to how well the Americans respond," Dulaimi says. Hopefully, Wolfowitz and the other bosses will get the message. ■

Stop blaming Washington first.

States' Rights

BY GREGG EASTERBROOK

WANT TO KNOW why Gray Davis may soon become only the second governor in U.S. history to be popularly removed from office? One reason may be California's $38 billion deficit. And, while governors in other states are not about to be recalled, many other state budgets are troubled—48 of the 50 are currently in the red. In the new fiscal year, which began recently for most, states face an estimated $70 billion shortfall, and the majority have already spent their rainy-day funds while exhausting the accounting gimmicks that can be used to postpone days of reckoning. Regardless of who ends up governor of California, state deficits will be among the country's leading domestic political issues for the next several years. The National Governors Association warns that states face the "most dire fiscal situation since World War II."

The problem, many insist, is a lack of federal largesse. Writing from his home state of Oregon, Nicholas Kristof declared in a recent *New York Times* column, "Washington is not just aloof from the pain out here in real America, but is making matters worse." A series of *Doonesbury* cartoons suggested George W. Bush was personally responsible for the early closure of Portland schools. Governors and mayors now call on Washington to channel them aid. Washington could, of course, rescue the states by throwing them money. But that solution presents a problem of its own: To bail out the states, the federal government would have to obtain money from taxpayers. Taxpayers who live in—states.

Ever since World War II, the nation's governors, Republican and Democrat alike, have relied on a bookkeeping switcheroo in which Congress taxes Americans (that is, residents of states) at a higher rate than the federal budget actually requires and then sends some of the revenue back to states. This arrangement allows governors to denounce the big spenders in Washington while simultaneously relying on the big spenders in Washington to keep state budgets in the black. It also allows state income taxes and other local levies to be artificially lower than if they reflected the true cost of state spending, while focusing voter rage on a

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federal tax line that is artificially high.

A better—and more honest—policy would be for states, cities, and counties either to cut their budgets or to tax themselves at whatever level is needed to support their spending habits. Blaming Washington for money problems that localities have brought upon themselves simply feeds the unhealthy, but fashionable, pretense that government spending can go up while taxes go down, without consequences.

"I'M THE ONLY candidate in this race who has ever balanced a budget," Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis memorably claimed during the 1988 presidential contest. In the current primaries, former Vermont Governor Howard Dean has bragged, "I'm the only candidate in this race who has ever balanced a budget." In truth, neither Dukakis nor Dean ever came remotely close to balancing a budget, at least in the sense of raising as much money as he spent. The Massachusetts and Vermont ledgers, like all state budgets, were in the black only because of federal aid. In fiscal 2001, 21 percent of state revenue came as federal grants for education, transportation, Medicaid, and a range of other programs. Were it not for such donations from the U.S. Treasury, all states would run perennial deficits.

In turn, national budgets in the postwar era have often dipped into the red owing to federal support of the states. In fiscal 2002, Washington gave $412 billion to the states, more than it spent on defense, while running a $158 billion deficit. Had federal income tax funds not been channeled to states, the fiscal 2002 national budget would have shown a huge surplus; federal taxes could have been cut and the central government still been comfortably in the black. Instead, the U.S. Treasury went into debt to support the states and their cities, while the federal income tax was higher than it might otherwise have been, focusing voter rage on Washington as states could post lower taxes than actually needed to support their spending.

Of course, some state spending, such as that for Medicaid, is mandated by federal law, and Washington should fund what it mandates. But this problem has declined since Congress passed the Unfunded Mandate Reform Act of 1995; meanwhile, the share of state revenue that comes from Washington has steadily increased. According to the Council of State Governments, states' receipts from Washington increased more than 50 percent, in real-dollar terms, during the '90s, in part owing to the funding of what had been unfunded mandates. Washington does impose ever more rules on the states but also grants ever more money.

In truth, many local governments brought their budget woes upon themselves. State spending has increased faster than inflation every fiscal year since 1982. In the decade leading up to fiscal year 2001, when the current recession hit, federal spending rose by about half, while state and local government spending rose 78 percent. State and city government employment has increased in the past decade as federal government employment has declined. For example, in the past four decades, New York City private-sector employment has shown zero growth, while city payrolls rose 20 percent, adding some 90,000 workers whom the same-sized pool of private employees must support.

States also cut taxes during the late '90s by $40 billion—an amount that almost equals the $50 billion budget shortfall states faced at the beginning of fiscal 2003, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Throughout the past three decades, Americans paid on average 11 percent of personal income as state and local taxes; but, owing to recent state and local tax cuts, Americans currently pay 10.6 percent of their income in this category. That fourth-tenths of a percent works out to about $35 billion annually, a sizable portion of the current problem. Governors wanted to cut taxes; now they want to hand Washington the invoice.

Current state-budget woes are even less defensible given that states recently gained two significant sources of revenue. They took in about $30 billion in gambling proceeds in 2001, up almost half from the total of five years before, and they also now benefit from the tobacco settlement, in which the major cigarette companies agreed to pay states about $246 billion over 25 years.

Nevertheless, some maintain that the states should receive the next grand federal bailout. Felix Rohatyn, the financier who supervised New York City's financial recovery in the late '70s, has proposed a federal bonus of up to $75 per year to the states—a bonus to be paid for by expanding the federal deficit.

But, if borrowing is the answer, why shouldn't the states do it themselves? The answer bailout supporters give is that state constitutions require balanced budgets. Every state except Vermont has a constitution that mandates a balanced budget. But that hasn't prevented states from taking on debt; in 2000, states owed about $548 billion, mainly as development bonds. Financing the construction of schools or highways using bonds, rather than appropriations, moves spending off the part of state books that is governed by balanced-budget rules. Lots of debt can be issued this way, even under a balanced-budget state constitution, since most such clauses have loopholes. Star-crossed California, for example, hopes soon to sell $10.7 billion worth of bonds to keep Sacramento from going into receivership.

Moreover, states make their own constitutions, which can be changed; they already are changing at a dizzying pace. According to Janice May, a professor of government at the University of Texas, in 2000 and 2001 alone, states amended their constitutions some 154 times, including 25 amendments regarding finances. In most states, amending the state constitution requires nothing like the elaborate process required to amend the U.S. Constitution, because state constitutions are mostly administrative boilerplate. If states wanted to do away with their balanced-budget requirements, they could do so easily.

There are signs that a few state and local governments are beginning to shoulder more of their own budgetary burdens. At least 15 states have raised taxes this year or effec-

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tively done so by increasing fees or altering assessment formulas. Republican governors in Alabama, Idaho, and Maryland are among those favoring tax increases; the Republican mayor of New York City has raised some taxes and wants to raise more.

Needless to say, no one likes tax increases, but reducing federal contributions to the states, while revamping the system so that state and local taxes rise while federal taxes fall, would be attractive on several levels.

First, it's honest. Voters should know what government costs. The current bookkeeping switcheroo makes state and local governments seem cheaper than they really are, while making the national government seem more expensive than it really is. Small wonder, then, that voter anger is directed toward Washington. Artificially boosted anger toward the federal government distorts politics by lowering public respect for Washington institutions, which must have played some role in making the United States the greatest nation on earth. Artificially increasing the cost of national government also guarantees the endless tedium of presidential candidates running against Washington. Many recent presidents—Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush—were governors who ran against Washington while boasting of how well they administered their own state's fiscal houses. This simply is not honest, yet the bookkeeping is set up to encourage such deceit.

Second, to the extent the U.S. federalist system gives states many freedoms, it ought to give them equal responsibilities. States want their views respected, and it is not only Southern politicians who speak of states' rights: Nearly all governors praise the states as "laboratories of democracy." But, if states want to make up their own minds, they ought to pay their own way; if they want to conduct experiments, voters ought to know what the experiments really cost.

Some federal aid to states is justified by the equity principle: Other things being equal, well-to-do states ought to help out poorer ones. But the equity principle applies only to programs specifically designed for the needy, such as Medicaid, not to general state-budget lines, such as transportation funds. It has never been clear why, to use a current example, taxpayers across the nation should bear most of the expense of improving Boston highways so that local drivers don't get stuck in traffic. And consider that, in January, voters in high-quality-of-life Oregon rejected a referendum that would have raised state income taxes to solve state-budget problems and fund a full school year. Already, Oregon has no sales taxes; now, Oregon voters want to shift the cost of their budget dereliction onto voters in other states.

In states and cities across the country, the dynamic is the same. Everyone wants needed money to come from the federal government, which would get it from voters who live in—states. But why should federal taxpayers generally be hit with extra obligations so that California or Alabama or Oregon or any particular state doesn't have to tax itself at the level necessary to support whatever services its voters demand?

"The governors are very much appreciative of the fact they will not have to make draconian cuts or enact tax increases to balance their budgets" quite yet, Kentucky Governor Paul Patton, chair of the National Governors Association, wrote to Congress in June after it passed a little-noticed $20 billion special appropriation for states. Governors may be appreciative now, but soon they'll likely be asking the federal government for still more—so they can "balance" their budgets and return to denouncing those big spenders in Washington. ■

Is Snow worse than O'Neill?

Buried Treasury

BY NOAM SCHEIBER

FOR A MAN whose chief selling point was his supposedly silver tongue, Treasury Secretary John Snow's first major foray into the international currency markets left something to be desired. Responding to a question from George Stephanopoulos on ABC's "This Week" in mid-May, Snow let it be known that he had no real attachment to the strong-dollar policy favored by the Clinton and Bush administrations. "Well, you know, when the dollar is at a lower level, it helps exports. And I think that exports are getting stronger as a result, yes," Snow opined. The dollar promptly dropped to a four-year low against the euro.

The immediate question was whether Snow had meant to reverse eight years of economic policy with what was, after all, a casual remark. And Snow appeared to answer that question in the affirmative late that same week when he dismissed the dollar's decline as "fairly modest." On top of that, he told reporters, a "strong dollar" really means a dollar that is "something people are willing to hold" and that is a "good medium of exchange"—which came as news to the world's currency traders, who'd previously assumed a strong dollar primarily meant something that could be traded for a lot of foreign currency. The dollar abruptly began its second nosedive in as many weeks the following Monday, May 19, leading Ari Fleischer and Treasury spokesman

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Rob Nichols to rush out to assure the press that, as Fleischer put it, "The dollar policy is unchanged." It was only when the president himself fielded the dollar question during an interview in late May that currency traders finally stopped scratching their heads. The dollar's recent fall, the president enunciated, was "contrary to our policy." The greenback's decline quickly halted, and it has since steadily gained ground against the major foreign currencies. Still, it was a significant embarrassment for Snow: After all, a Treasury secretary who's seen as monkeying around with currency markets for domestic reasons rapidly undermines his own credibility—particularly when his pronouncements are subsequently contradicted by the White House.

But perhaps the most remarkable thing about the dollar fiasco is that Snow was probably doing exactly what the administration wanted him to do. Talk to most conservatives, and they'll insist that Snow was not behaving like a bumbling neophyte or a loose-cannon maverick but rather a loyal aide faithfully executing White House policy. "Personally, I think he was speaking [the] administration line," says Club for Growth President Stephen Moore. "The White House wanted the dollar to fall—they were buying into the idea that it was hurting the balance of trade. It wasn't one of these things where he was speaking out of school."

The episode helps illustrate why conservatives have been elated with Snow since he replaced Paul O'Neill as Treasury secretary in January. Like mainstream observers in the media and elsewhere, conservatives thought O'Neill was a disaster; they just thought so for different reasons. O'Neill had been widely derided for his cavalier comments about foreign currencies (he once triggered a mini-run on the Brazilian real) and his ham-handed response to last year's corporate scandals. But conservatives' main complaint with O'Neill wasn't his erratic behavior. It was his lack of unswerving loyalty to the White House. Which is why they greeted Snow's reckless comments about the dollar policy—which to an outsider looked an awful lot like the kind of gaffe to which O'Neill had been prone—with enthusiasm rather than dismay. "The problem with O'Neill was that he was a free agent all the time," says Moore. By contrast, "The one thing about John is that he will be and has been a total loyal soldier to Bush."

But the real trouble with O'Neill wasn't a lack of loyalty; it was a lack of authority. And, while his lack of personal credibility may have contributed to this, his more fundamental problem was that he served in an administration that relies almost exclusively on White House insiders to make economic policy and expects its Treasury Department to do little more than unquestioningly sell that policy to the public, the markets, and Congress. "O'Neill showed up here from time to time on things," says one Senate Democratic aide. "Usually, it turned out that whatever position he took was being undercut the next day or in a matter of hours by the White House."

If anything, then, Snow's quiet acquiescence in the humbling of his own department is a step in the wrong direction. Every White House faces pressure from its ideological base to promote an extreme economic agenda: For Democrats, it's excessive spending and overregulation; for Republicans, it's radical tax-cutting and deregulation. Both tend to favor using the tax code for wild (and highly inefficient) experiments in social engineering. In administrations where Treasury—which houses easily the largest and most competent collection of economists and tax lawyers in all of government—has influence, the worst of these ideas die a peaceful death. But, in administrations such as this one, where Treasury is weak, ideologues carry the day.

PRESIDENT BUSH'S MARGINALIZATION of the Treasury Department represents a significant break with precedent. "Every [other] administration really sort of figured it out; they used people [at Treasury]," says a former senior Treasury economist who served in the Reagan, first Bush, and Clinton administrations prior to serving in this one. "They didn't worry about whether they agreed—we were encouraged to raise issues." This economist recalls, for example, that many of the professional staffers in the Reagan years were skeptical of an early White House proposal, known as the "federalism initiative," to send a slew of federal programs back to the states. "We told them that some sorting out of responsibilities makes sense, but this particular idea is crazy. They said, 'Fine, just get the numbers straight.' " At the outset of the current administration, by contrast, "The first task I was given, I was handed a book. They said, 'We need a summary by next Thursday.' " This menial task, says the economist, "was a message. The sort of [job] you give undergrads."

The Treasury Department's current lowly status stacks up particularly poorly compared with its role in the Clinton administration, during which a succession of powerful secretaries catapulted the department to unprecedented prominence. President Clinton's first Treasury secretary, former Senator Lloyd Bentsen, became indispensable for his ability to navigate Capitol Hill. "He had a lot to do with getting the '93 budget through," says one former Treasury official. "He understood the Senate, and those were one-vote margins." His successor in 1995, Robert Rubin, had developed a tremendous personal rapport with Clinton, first as an economic adviser during the 1992 campaign, then as head of the president's National Economic Council (NEC). And, thanks to Rubin's mentoring and his own outsized intellectual stature, Clinton's third and final Treasury secretary, Lawrence Summers, enjoyed similar sway with the White House. Gary Gensler, undersecretary for domestic finance under Rubin and Summers, notes that, even after Rubin moved to Treasury, he continued to attend the daily morning meeting of senior White House staff. "He was the only Cabinet officer during the entire term that was in [the Oval Office] every day. And, when he stepped down, he secured for Larry Summers the right to go, too." The result, says one Treasury economist, was "there was always a feeling when Rubin was there—and probably Summers—that,

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if the Treasury Department really didn't want something to happen, ... the secretary could go to the Oval Office and do what needed to be done to exercise influence."

Indeed, the traditional role of the economists and tax lawyers at Treasury has largely been defensive—to stop bad ideas emanating from the White House before they see the light of day. And Clinton's Treasury certainly did that. One former official recalls how an early incarnation of the White House's HOPE college tax credit required students to be drug-free in addition to maintaining a B average. "The IRS would have had to try to figure out whether all the parents filing for credits—whether their kids are drug-free." The proposal was dropped, this official continues, after "the office of tax policy spent time making clear to people that this is not something the IRS should try to do."

But Treasury's influence under Clinton extended far beyond playing defense on White House initiatives and into the broad direction of economic policy. Though he famously complained about being shut out of the inner sanctum of the White House, Bentsen nevertheless played a critical role early in the Clinton administration. As Bob Woodward describes in his book *Maestro*, Bentsen reached a "gentleman's agreement" with Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan prior to Clinton's first address to Congress: The administration would try to cut the deficit by $140 billion over four years, and, in return, Greenspan would be less inclined to raise short-term interest rates. With Greenspan's imprimatur, Bentsen and Rubin (who served in the White House at the time) beat back efforts by the president's more liberal political advisers, James Carville and Paul Begala, to lower the deficit-reduction target.

When Rubin moved to Treasury in 1995, he managed to leverage his personal influence in the White House into institutional advantages for his new department. On domestic policy, Treasury's reach extended to social policy issues, such as health care and welfare reform. "Every time something had to happen, it needed financing, and they had to come to us," explains one Clinton Treasury official. "[Clinton Health and Human Services Secretary Donna] Shalala's crew would say, 'We don't need you [to be involved].' ... Then they would come at the last minute and say, 'We know you have twenty million dollars in your back pocket.' " The pattern extended even to foreign policy, where Treasury took the lead on a series of bailouts—Mexico in 1995, Thailand and South Korea in 1997 and 1998—in the aftermath of several high-profile currency crises. "We argued that, in order to do large bailouts, you have to understand the financial dimension, and we're the only agency that does," recalls one international financial official. Even previously obscure Treasury agencies rose to prominence under Rubin. Says one former official in Treasury's Office of Economic Policy (OEP): "It's traditionally been a backwater office. But, because of a set of personalities in the few years I was there, ... it was right in the middle of whole a bunch of policy debates." Among other issues, OEP weighed in heavily on global warming and tobacco legislation.

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S desire to reduce Treasury's prominence was evident as early as the presidential transition in December 2000. According to Gensler, who regularly interacted with incoming Bush Treasury officials during that period, "There was quite a feeling amongst the transition group that—we heard indirectly and directly—they thought some of the ascendancy of Treasury during Clinton days needed to be adjusted." Some of that may have been no more than a reversion to the pre-Clinton status quo, with the National Security Council and the State Department reclaiming responsibility for some areas of international economic policy. But it soon went beyond that, with the department's economic and legal professionals finding their input into policy decisions dramatically scaled back. Under Clinton, says a former Treasury economist who served in both administrations, "We were right in the policy process. We got into the president's briefing when they discussed developing the Social Security plan. ... We found less of that in the O'Neill days. [Top Treasury officials] were less interested in hearing contrary views to what they had in mind"—a change the economist believes originated with the White House.

Part of the problem was O'Neill's unwillingness or inability to protect his bureaucratic turf, which one former Treasury official says became evident at O'Neill's very first senior staff meeting. Rather than focus his comments on Treasury's role within the administration, as many had anticipated, O'Neill spent 30 to 45 minutes talking about workplace safety. "A lot of people thought, 'There's not a lot of lawyers getting hurt here,' " the official complains. O'Neill's refusal to protect Treasury's prerogatives meant that, when it came to formulating economic policy, Treasury was often left out in the cold. "A strong secretary finds out that there are people making tax policy going around him; he puts a stop to that," recounts another economist who served in both Treasury Departments. "It wasn't clear that O'Neill had the inclination or political might to do that."

But more important than O'Neill's personal limitations as a bureaucratic operator was the White House's determination to formulate economic policy with little input from Treasury. "A lot of things were developed outside the building without much influence from inside the building. People [at Treasury] don't like that—they are the people who know the most about the nuts and bolts of these policies," says the same economist. The White House even controlled much of Treasury's interaction with Capitol Hill. Gensler, who speaks frequently with his successor at Treasury, Peter Fisher, observes, "If you're the head of domestic finance—Fisher—someone relevant to the White House, you're not allowed on the Hill without chaperones from the White House." (A Treasury spokesman says Treasury officials visit Capitol Hill unattended except in matters directly important to the White House.) During the Clinton administration, by contrast, Gensler regularly negotiated directly with members of Congress without being accompanied by anyone from the White House Office of Legislative Affairs.

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From the outset, the White House has also dictated much of Treasury's policy agenda. Several officials who'd stayed on from the Clinton Treasury Department recall a major push to study the feasibility of dynamic scoring—a way of accounting for tax cuts that minimizes their cost by factoring in the anticipated effect on economic growth. "The pressure was significant," recalls one economist. "The pressure came from the White House, and Treasury went along."

Others describe being lobbied by White House officials on behalf of conservatives outside the administration. "You might get a call from [then–White House Deputy Chief of Staff] Josh Bolten to someone in O'Neill's office saying, 'Here's the letter, what do you think? What's the policy? This guy's real important to us,'" says one former official. On other occasions, conservative activists lobbied Treasury directly. This same official remembers the department being roped into a project at the behest of anti-tax activist Grover Norquist, who wanted Treasury to issue an official document, known as a guidance, advising nonprofits of the amount of political activity they could engage in while maintaining their tax-exempt status. (Norquist had earlier written a letter to Treasury on the matter: "Recently we have seen liberal pressure groups scaring religious organizations with the idea that they will lose their nonprofit tax status if they allow political candidates to speak and distribute information on policy issues. Although they are legally allowed to do this under existing law, most religious organizations are easily intimidated and cannot afford the thousands of dollars for a confident legal opinion.") "Grover called someone in the secretary's office saying, 'We've got to have this.' He would call constantly," says the official. (Norquist allows that, "I've talked to [current Assistant Secretary for Tax Policy Pam] Olson. ... I've talked to [Olson's Bush administration predecessor Mark] Weinberger lots.") The official recalls no similar interaction with outside interest groups during the Clinton administration.

Sometimes such outside pressure produced dramatic changes in Clinton-era policies. Late in Rubin's tenure at Treasury, for instance, the United States had begun participating in an international initiative to crack down on tax evasion by reining in tax-haven jurisdictions—often Caribbean countries, such as Antigua and Barbados—and by increasing information exchange between countries (so that, for example, the U.S. government would know when a citizen earned money abroad). By the time Summers took over at Treasury in 1999, the process was already well under way, with an American delegation chairing the relevant committee at the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development in Paris. But enthusiasm for the project vanished when the Bush team took over in late 2000. "The new people came in and hated it. It was anathema to them," recalls one Treasury official involved in the initiative. "It was the first thing they focused on." Worse, it wasn't so much White House economic officials as political hands—and activists outside the administration—who led the charge to undercut the anti-tax-haven efforts. "There were people who worked for [Karl] Rove. ... [Heritage Foundation economist Dan] Mitchell was associated with that. Norquist came in on this. They talked to everybody." In the end, the information-exchange portion of the project was salvaged when Deputy Treasury Secretary Kenneth Dam managed to convince the White House that the political fallout from abandoning it wasn't worth the trouble. But the feeling at Treasury was that the effort had been scaled back considerably under political pressure from outside groups.

No White House official more consistently bullied and outmaneuvered Treasury than Glenn Hubbard, the former chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers (CEA). As a deputy assistant secretary in the Treasury Department during the first Bush administration, Hubbard had the advantage of knowing how Treasury operated and could circumvent the department entirely when it suited him. For example, one of Treasury's official responsibilities is to estimate the revenue loss for every tax proposal that comes out of the administration, a process known as "scoring." The process is a perennial flash point between the White House, which wants the costs as low as possible, and the professionals at Treasury, who pride themselves on the soundness of their numbers. "In the Clinton administration, there had been pushing back and forth—where the White House says, 'Score this lower; you're not taking into account this or that,'" says one economist who served in both the Bush and Clinton Treasury Departments. But, adds a former Treasury tax official, "Because Hubbard was at one point deputy assistant secretary, he knew all the people. He could put direct pressure on [them]. ... Downward pressure. No question." One of Hubbard's most ingenious moves, say these officials, was to hire away a scorer from Treasury in mid-2002 and install him at CEA, giving Hubbard additional ammunition against Treasury's numbers.

All of which left Hubbard in prime position to push his signature initiative, the exclusion of stock dividends from income taxation, to the top of the administration's economic agenda last fall. Between Hubbard's growing clout and the departure of some top economic officials who'd been less enthusiastic about the idea, such as NEC head Lawrence Lindsey and Weinberger, there was "no one to say no," according to one former Treasury official. Little surprise, then, that Hubbard's brainchild ended up accounting for roughly half of the $700 billion tax-cut package the administration unveiled in January.

WHEN SNOW REPLACED O'Neill, many outside the administration expected Treasury to reassert itself on policy matters, particularly since Hubbard was planning to leave the White House in late February. But the administration and Snow himself made clear that Bush's marginalization of Treasury was structural, not simply the result of particular personalities. As Snow himself has described his role to *The Wall Street Journal*, "Our job is to make the best possible case for the [president's] proposal, to argue it, to

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carry the message. ... The Treasury secretary at best is a pinch hitter."

And that, according to most accounts, was about the extent of Snow's involvement in Bush's tax cut earlier this year. According to one Republican Hill staffer, "[Hubbard] was involved up until the time he left. ... [The tax cut] was kind of already set in terms of economics and broad policy. They'd set the matrix. At that point, it was more the Treasury folks talking about how you flesh out the four corners." Indeed, the one time Snow appears to have roused the ire of the White House and its conservative allies was when, during the debate over the tax cut, he told a *Wall Street Journal* reporter that he would consider deferring the proposed acceleration of some income tax cuts if it would help move the package through Congress. Moore recalls a conversation he had with a chastened Snow shortly after the incident: "I said, 'Let's don't start compromising with ourselves. We do that, and we move the debate in the Democrats' favor.' He agreed. He said he wasn't thinking when he said that."

Apart from that incident, there has been little or no evidence of Snow's having policy views of his own on any subject. Once an avowed deficit hawk, Snow trotted out a familiar White House line to finesse his support of the administration's new budget-busting tax cut at his confirmation hearing in January. "Let me say, the deficits we're looking at are relatively modest compared with the GDP, and the debt levels are relatively modest versus the GDP," Snow told the Senate Finance Committee. "Getting the American economy strong is the best way to service that debt. Reducing taxes stimulates the economy and puts us in a better position to do that." (Never mind that in 1995 Snow publicly brooded that deficits of this magnitude could undermine growth by adding two percentage points to long-term interest rates.)

Snow hasn't put his foot down even on matters normally left to the Treasury secretary's discretion. At the behest of the White House, for example, Snow is now pushing a former Illinois state official named Glen Bower for a seat on the federal tax court. "The guy is just not suitable to be a tax-court judge. It's blatant and obvious," says one Democratic Senate staffer. (Bower reportedly owes several hundred dollars to the IRS in back taxes and interest.) "There's no way they would have pushed it under O'Neill. ... [Snow] is playing politics."

In fact, politics seems to be much of what Treasury does these days. According to this same aide, Snow speaks frequently with the ranking Democrat on the finance committee, Max Baucus, who pushed for Snow's confirmation back in January. But, whereas Baucus thought of O'Neill as a "decent, independent thinker" if not an altogether influential Treasury secretary, he has formed an entirely different opinion of Snow. "He thinks [Snow is] just a political hack, in there to do what Rove wants," says the aide. That view conforms reasonably well to a description of meetings between Rove and Snow that *The Weekly Standard*'s Fred Barnes offered in the spring issue of *The International Economy*: "A measure of where Treasury stands is the location of the Rove meetings: Snow goes to [Rove's] office."

The effects of this power dynamic are starting to show. Earlier this year, Treasury collaborated with the White House and the Office of Management and Budget on a study that used dynamic scoring to lower the cost of the administration's tax-cut proposal by about one-third. But the study was reportedly squelched amid concerns that it was too blatant and political a massaging of the numbers. "Without a doubt, that's how it would be seen," Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley told *The Wall Street Journal* in May. (An administration official insists the study was never completed.) But such concerns apparently don't always carry the day. This week *The Washington Post* reported that the Treasury Department's Office of Tax Analysis recently took the "unusually political step" of calculating the effects on various "tax families" of Democratic plans to repeal Bush's tax cuts—something you'd expect from the Republican National Committee, not career economists at Treasury.

The height of Treasury's crass politicking under Snow came in June, when Olson, the assistant secretary for tax policy, devoted several lines in a speech to attacking billionaire investor Warren Buffett, who had earlier come out against the administration's dividend tax cut. The way Olson saw it, the tax cut "means a certain Midwestern oracle [Buffett]—who, it must be noted, has played the tax code like a fiddle—is still safe retaining all his earnings. Perhaps, however, the equalization of tax on dividends and capital gains will even cause some of his shareholders to lose their complete affinity for capital gains." One Clinton-era Treasury tax official was flabbergasted: "I saw Pam Olson being quoted as taking out after Warren Buffett, and I couldn't believe that. ... Picking on a particular taxpayer was unbelievable to me." (According to a Treasury spokesman, Olson wasn't referring to a specific taxpayer but a "handful of opinion leaders that talk about the tax code.")

This week, the administration dispatched Snow, Commerce Secretary Don Evans, and Labor Secretary Elaine Chao on a "Jobs & Growth Tour" of the Midwest to highlight the "[m]ore than 1.7 million taxpayers in Minnesota, and another 1.8 million taxpayers in Wisconsin, [who] will have lower income tax bills in 2003 as a result of President Bush's Jobs and Growth Act," as the Treasury Department's website put it. It's a telling announcement. Commerce and Labor, two bureaucracies with little economic policy-making roles to speak of, have traditionally been dumping grounds for a president's political cronies (think Bill Daley and Alexis Herman). And this administration is no different: Evans was Bush's fund-raising chief; Chao is Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell's wife. Because of their limited policy-making roles, the Commerce and Labor secretaries have often been sent off on political errands across the country, talking up the president's policies at events and rallies. The difference in this administration is that the Treasury secretary gets sent along with them. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

On a Bright Morning

FROM MY APARTMENT, ON THAT bright September morning in 2001, I could see thick black smoke pouring from the two towers. After a few paralyzed moments, I turned on the television to find out what had happened—and, creature of our age that I am, to certify that it was actually happening. About thirty minutes later, Tom Brokaw, not always a source of insight yet clearly shaken to his depths, was the first to speak the four words that became the affective core of the event: "The world has changed."

SEPTEMBER 11
(Empire)

The current plans for buildings to replace the towers are now in dispute between architect and developer. The memorial to the victims is not yet settled. (I keep remembering one of the purest such that I have seen. Near the cathedral in Canterbury, Chaucer's Canterbury, is a World War II memorial that is simply a beautifully kept public flower garden.) Meanwhile—perhaps a meaningless word because this film is a good deal more than just filler until the structure and memorial are ready—here is **SEPTEMBER 11.**

The producer, a French television figure named Alain Brigand, wanted to mark that day of world change with an assemblage of short films made around the world in reaction or response. He engaged eleven eminent directors from eleven different countries and gave each of them the same simple request: create a film lasting eleven minutes and nine seconds—in Europe the date is written 11/9—and restrict the time frame to that date. Obviously the variety that was bound to result was part of Brigand's plan. The astonishment is that almost all of the assemblage is fascinating, very little is poor, and one segment is superb.

Advance word was that the film was anti-American, so I deal first with the only segment that could be, within reason, so construed. Ken Loach, the English director known for his political concerns, disregarded part of Brigand's request: his segment is set on an earlier 9/11. He was reminded of September 11 in 1973, when Chilean president Salvador Allende was overthrown and murdered, with (to put it softly) advance knowledge in the Nixon White House. Loach's reminder of the earlier date is rightly discomfiting, but the chief objection is that it strays from the project's plan. The connection with this 9/11 is facile. The implication that the World Trade Center attack was retribution for American actions abroad—not a new idea—is problematic: if that idea were applied universally and retribution for every nation's past were meted out arbitrarily, not many buildings anywhere in the world would be left standing.

Now let's dispose of the sorriest of the ten other shorts, a saccharine embarrassment made by Sean Penn, one of the most insistently tough American directors. He contrived a one-character piece about an aged widower, played by Ernest Borgnine, who lives near the WTC and who behaves as if his wife were still living there with him. We get a few glimpses of the burning towers through his window as, paying them no mind, he goes about his marital chat and doings. Penn's piece has more to do with Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" than with 9/11.

The opening short is by Samira Makhmalbaf, the young Iranian woman who made *Blackboards,* about itinerant teachers looking for students. Here Makhmalbaf concentrates on children, Iranian refugees in Afghanistan who have heard about the WTC and are frightened that the United States will bomb Afghanistan in revenge. They are making mud bricks to build a bomb shelter. The children are small enough and the segment brief enough to cause a ripple of pathos.

Claude Lelouch deals with a pair of mature French lovers who live in New York near the WTC. The two are about to split up. The woman is a deaf-mute, and after the man leaves, presumably forever, her condition helps to keep her unaware of what appears on television. The man returns, riven by what we know is happening, and now plans to stay with her. This conclusion is just as silly to remember as it was to see. Lelouch was apparently so determined to be conventionally French, with a pair of lovers as his center, that he wasn't bothered by the reductiveness of his story. Still, the woman is tenderly played by Emmanuelle Laborit.

Youssef Chahine, the Egyptian whom some consider a major director, treats the encounter of an older man, a native of his country, with the spirit of a young American soldier who was killed in an earlier terrorist attack. Little in this encounter registers with us. Idrissa Ouedraogo of Burkina Faso, who really is a major director, presents a wry African version of what could have been a Mark Twain episode. A group of mischievous schoolboys think they have spotted Osama bin Laden in their town and try to capture him for the reward. Disillusion follows. Danis Tanovic, of Bosnia-Herzegovina, fashions a quiet memorial to another slaughter—by former compatriots of the victims—on the eleventh day of another month, July 1995, in Srebrenica.

The Israeli film-maker Amos Gitai displays virtuosic directing ability. His subject is a car-bomb explosion in Tel Aviv (fictional but not all that remote from fact) that also occurs on 9/11: a microcosm of the WTC. Gitai's re-creation of the bombing—its shock and the hyperactivity after it: the ambulances, the police, the reporters, the maelstrom whose center is murder—is carried out with frightening skill and with too-abundant knowledge of the real thing. I thought of *Open City,* in which Roberto Rossellini re-created the German occupation of Rome only a few months after the Germans had left.

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Mira Nair's segment, the only other one not confined to September 11, is based on facts that take her onward. In New York, a young Pakistani man disappears on that morning. Police and feds are concerned about this odd behavior by a Muslim and suspect his connection with the explosions. Eventually it is learned that he was one of the victims. Shohei Imamura, who made the excellent *Black Rain,* about a family that survived Hiroshima but was nonetheless destroyed by it, has long been mordant on the subject of war. Here he deals near-disgustingly with a veteran reduced to animal state.

The best, most telling segment is by Alejandro González Iñárritu, the young Mexican director who made *Amores Perros.* He has conceived of his film not as a political commentary or a realistic rendering but as a distillation. Thus he conveys what lies at the base of all the other segments, good and otherwise. González Iñárritu begins with a black screen, which remains black for fifteen or twenty seconds while we hear the distant roaring of a crowd, words indistinct. Then there is a quick flash of the burning towers, then the blackness again with the roar, then another flash, then blackness again. Other voices, almost visually jagged, slash in—announcers, cell phones, turmoil—as we get quick glimpses of bodies falling from the towers. Music, played by a string quartet, filters in, then swells as the glimpses, the blackness, the noises continue. At the end of this segment we feel we have had an awesome look at desolation in the abstract. A final scriptural statement on the screen neither aids nor detracts from this powerful work.

In its entirety, Brigand's production underscores what many of us have felt in the last few years. Yes, the world has changed. ■

Frank Kermode

The Horizon Girl

THE GIRL FROM THE FICTION DEPARTMENT: A PORTRAIT OF SONIA ORWELL
By Hilary Spurling
(Counterpoint, 194 pp., $24)

I KNEW SONIA ORWELL SLIGHTLY, having met her at parties of which she was beyond challenge the life and soul—full of combative talk and occasionally, under the stress of disagreement, breaking into French, a language in which she had become extraordinarily proficient in the cafés of the Left Bank. Others with a higher degree of acquaintance gossiped about her, yet much about her life was not generally known until the now-flourishing Orwell business got under way; and the interest of Orwell's biographers in Sonia was indirect, the marriage having been so short and the relict not easy to get on with. She still tends to be dismissed as the fussy keeper of the flame, and as Orwell's perhaps rather grasping widow, and little more than that. But now, as the centennial biographies of her husband hit the stores, Sonia Orwell has a biography to herself.

Her first lover, Eugene Vinaver, a courtly and learned Polish exile, was a friendly colleague of mine for years, but I had not the slightest notion of their early relationship. Vinaver's major work was his edition of the manuscript of Malory's *Morte d'Arthur,* and I was astonished to learn that this exact scholar should have entrusted the transcription of a unique manuscript to an inexperienced girl. Yet he was right to do so. She returned his trust by letting him take her on a terrifying drive through central Europe, though (according to Hilary Spurling) he had never driven a car before. This reminded me of one of Vinaver's own stories: taking his driving test in Paris, he was so terrified by the traffic at the Étoile that he stopped the car and ran off, leaving the examiner to take it home. He alleged that since that moment he had never again tried to get a license or driven a car.

Another admired colleague of mine, the well-known painter William Coldstream, later head of the Slade School, had been, naturally also without troubling to inform me, Sonia's serious lover. She owed a lot to these men, but even more important to her was the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. She liked very intelligent older men, and they were quick to see how remarkable she was, and how useful.

It would not be easy to characterize the membership of Sonia's inner circle, which later included many artists, including Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon. Its literary center was the offices of Cyril Connolly's magazine *Horizon,* which was backed by a rich young collector named Peter Watson, to whom Sonia was even more devoted than she was to Connolly. Connolly liked to be served by beautiful upper-class girls. Although plump and far from handsome, he seems to have had a powerful attraction for women, or anyway for those who responded to his appeals for pity and agreed with his opinion that a chronic shortage of cash and the consequent need to work at something—writing reviews, for instance—was preventing him from producing a work of genius, which was the only kind of work, he believed, worth bothering about.

Sonia Brownell became chief rose in his rosebud garden of girls. Still in her twenties and the victim of a poor and interrupted education, she was sometimes left to run the famous journal more or less on her own. It expired after a decade, having survived all the bombings between 1940 and 1945, a period during which it continued, against considerable odds, to appear regularly and to defy, sometimes flippantly, any interest in the war, which Connolly refused to consider his business. *Horizon* is now remembered with some nostalgia, partly because of its genuine quality, largely because its editor's slightly outrageous Francophile charm continues to attract biographers. He really could write: *Enemies of Promise* and *The Condemned Playground* are minor classics, and *The Unquiet Grave,* his pseudonymous volume of melancholy, self-pitying aphorisms, still has admirers. But at least some of the credit for the journal, and for Connolly's celebrity as an editor, belongs to Sonia. She "discovered," among others, Angus Wilson; and by 1947 she was editing whole numbers while Connolly made triumphant visits to Paris and New York.

I can think of no better label for his milieu than upper-class bohemian, a

Frank Kermode's new book, PIECES OF MY MIND: ESSAYS AND CRITICISM 1958–2002, *will be published in September by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

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class with whom the term "middle-class" was an insult. Connolly, like many of his friends, assumed that he deserved the best of everything, regardless of whether he could afford it. The most intimate and therefore the funniest portrait of him is in *Tears Before Bedtime,* a memoir by Barbara Skelton, one of his wives. Skelton was an adventurous woman who had been the mistress of King Farouk of Egypt, and after the union with Connolly ended she went on to marry the publisher George Weidenfeld. A woman who saw the world mostly as a parade of pathetic absurdities, she is very hard on her mates, especially Connolly, who went in for childish sulks: "He wouldn't come down to breakfast but lay in his bed sucking the sheet ends, which is always a bad sign. He sometimes lay for an hour with folds of sheet pouring from his mouth like ectoplasm." But she shared his ideas of what life owed their kind of people. One has to imagine a couple with a vast overdraft, sometimes driven to the pawnshop; lacking the few shillings they needed to get from their country cottage to London, yet choosing pre-war vintage claret, frowning if offered non-vintage champagne, taking caviar with their tea, and traveling in high style through Italy.

Most of the men who flourished or survived under such conditions were of the social class that took it for granted that sons went to Eton, or a school as nearly like it as possible, and then to Oxford. Connolly was at prep school and at Eton with Orwell; and despite their evident temperamental differences, reflected in the antithetical accounts that they wrote of their school days, they were lifelong friends. Orwell, like Sonia, was born in India, and in his twenties he served with the Indian Imperial Police in Burma. He is famous for his descriptions of life as a down-and-out in Paris and London, for his grim documentary on the lives of the poor in northern England in *The Road to Wigan Pier,* and for his decision to fight on the Republican side in Spain. It is true that his hatred of imperialism and capitalism induced him to lead the kind of life he was describing; but Orwell was always identifiable as a member of the same class as Connolly and most of his friends, with the same distinctive accent and the same sub-aristocratic ease of manner, so that his self-inflicted hardship might be regarded as a sort of inverted bohemianism.

Sonia had had an affair with him earlier, and when she married him on his deathbed she was choosing a husband from very much the same social stratum that provided her other lovers. Orwell was dying of tuberculosis, and the wedding took place beside his hospital bed. Not surprisingly, gossip suggested that Sonia was getting on to a good thing. After producing a fair amount of very high-class journalism and some good but not very well-rewarded fiction, Orwell had become celebrated as the author of *Animal Farm* and *1984*. He was not yet rich but was quite likely to become so; and one of the inducements he offered Sonia, in a characteristically low-toned letter proposing marriage, was the prospect of future royalties. Hostile critics have taken this to be her motive for marrying him.

HILARY SPURLING, A FRIEND of Sonia's in her later years and now a well-known biographer, has written this short book to express loyal disgust at this slander. There is no reason to think that she is telling anything but the truth. Her title is a quotation from *1984*, and Orwell was doubtless thinking of Sonia when he wrote the words: "She was very young, he thought, she still expected something from life.... She would not accept it as a law of nature that the individual is always defeated.... She did not understand that there was no such thing as happiness." It is easy enough to see why Orwell, broken by illness and by his struggles to represent the nightmare of contemporary history, should admire this generous and unquestioningly loyal young woman. To understand why she committed herself to him is equally easy when one has seen her for what she was: a woman whose generosity and loyalty, as well as her anger, had their origins in her own unhappiness.

Spurling offers some early biographical detail, but her main concern is with "the widow Orwell" as she knew her. The facts are these. Sonia was born on August 25, 1918. Her father was a Calcutta businessman who died, possibly by suicide, when she was four months old. Her Catholic mother, left with the baby and an elder sister, returned to England, married again, and went back to Calcutta. When she was six, Sonia was sent to school at an expensive English convent, where Vivien Leigh was a classmate. Her mother's second marriage collapsed and she set up house in London. She was a clever woman, and later became a brigadier in the Women's Army Corps. Now she taught Sonia "the importance of putting up a front" but did little to mitigate the horrors of her daughter's school life. Throughout her life Sonia felt scorn and disgust for her educators and spat if she saw a nun. Spurling remarks that having no truck whatever with faith, she made up for it by excelling in works.

A year in French-speaking Switzerland would have been a happy memory had she not been involved in a boating accident in which her three companions drowned. Back in London she learned to type and took a room in what is now called North Soho, a shabby district then favored by artists and writers. There she soon became the "Venus" of the famous Euston Road School of painters, of which Coldstream was a notable member; but when the onset of war dispersed the painters Sonia sought refuge at *Horizon,* working for nothing or next to nothing and scraping by with odd typing jobs. At *Horizon* she became indispensable because of her intelligence, her taste, and her willingness to serve. She showed extraordinary courage during the worst of the bombing. She was also, in her way, beautiful.

AS ORWELL'S WIDOW, SONIA had to deal with his estate, which came to exceed by many times the income that he had enjoyed when he was alive. Spurling pays keen attention to her discharge of this responsibility. The literary duties she did efficiently, defending her husband against critics of his anti-Stalinism and producing, with Ian Angus, a four-volume collection of Orwell's important non-fiction writings. Again with Angus, she set up an admirable Orwell archive at University College, London.

The financial side of her trusteeship did not go so well. Toward the end of his life Orwell had set up a company called George Orwell Productions, with himself and Sonia as directors, along with an accountant named Jack Harrison. Like Orwell himself, who had never earned enough to be taxed at all until the success of *Animal Farm,* Sonia understood nothing about taxes and was content to hand over everything, including her own earnings, to Harrison, taking out of the estate only what was needed for the education of Orwell's son, the ultimate beneficiary, and for her own support, just enough to allow her to live in London and, increasingly, in Paris, among her famous friends:

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Michel Leiris, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, Marguérite Duras, Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan. She married again, this time choosing a man with a château in France and an estate in England. As a "practicing homosexual" he had been in the news, and—since this was before the law was reformed—in prison. Conducted in opulent surroundings, the union, a *mariage blanc,* still did not work. Sonia took an overdose, was saved, and carried on alone.

Her scrupulous administration of the literary property irritated people who accused her of bossiness. She reluctantly authorized a biography of Orwell, which she read in proof and hated; she died before the book appeared. Much of the time, says Spurling, she was "driven by demons she could not fully control. Fear, suspicion, and hostility lay increasingly close to the surface. Insecurity or drink released an aggression that made her many enemies." Still, she was famous for friendship and for her willingness to succor friends in trouble.

In 1977 she moved to Paris, where she lived in "a single damp furnished room" without even a bath, and was accused of playing at being poor, like her late husband. But she really was poor. Harrison, her accountant fellow-director of George Orwell Productions, persuaded her to sign, without even reading them, papers that gave him control of the company; and she seems to have believed him when he said that paperback sales of one million a year produced little income. The thought that she had let George down made her unhappy, and so did the lawsuit that she felt obliged to pursue against Harrison. She died, penniless, before the action came to court.

Hilary Spurling has brought a good biographer's skills to the defense of a friend whom she is sure was not only unlucky in her life but also wantonly wronged. She understandably avoids much talk of her subject's more extreme behavior, preferring to stress both her high spirits and her fundamental unhappiness. She has done the job well. Sonia Orwell had qualities that gave her a special position at the heart of English culture in her time. Her skills, as she well knew, were not creative, but she dedicated them, with intelligent and unflagging devotion, to the creativity of others; and she deserves this affectionate, just, and occasionally angry portrait. ■

Elisa New

The Virtuecrat

JONATHAN EDWARDS: A LIFE
By George M. Marsden
(Yale University Press, 615 pp., $35)

IN 1750, JONATHAN EDWARDS, internationally known minister of the Congregational Church of Northampton, was dismissed from the pulpit that he had put at the center of the mass kindling of piety that we now call the Great Awakening. Few figures in New England had less reason to expect to be fired. It had been twenty-one years since Edwards, at age twenty-six, took over the pulpit that had been held for more than half a century by his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard, the so-called Pope of the Connecticut Valley. Thirteen years before, Edwards had established himself as an international figure with the publication of *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God,* an account of the revivals of 1734 and 1735. The work put Edwards in contact with ambitious evangelicals abroad and allowed him, in 1741, to make Northampton the base for an even greater stirring of religion.

At Sunday services and at weekday prayer meetings, taking his turn at nearby churches where visits by international Christian celebrities George Whitefield, Gilbert Tennent, and others had swelled the numbers in attendance, Edwards attracted converts newly "sensible" to the wonderful descent of grace. When he preached at Hadley, Canaan, Scantick, Stockbridge, and Westfield, believers responded with "outcries, faintings, and convulsions." Even the dour and phlegmatic Christians of Northampton, a population that Edwards once ruefully called "sermon-proof," were moved to demonstrative testimony. Most remarkable of all, he managed to convert scores of Northampton's adolescents, who were better known for tavern-hopping and "company-keeping" than for religiosity.

The Great Awakening in which Edwards participated was only one of many revivals of Christian piety in America, which, taken together, attest to the formidable power of certain ideas of the Reformation. The central notion of mankind's utter undeservingness, and of our complete dependence on God rather than on any earthly institution, was by no means universally held by all early migrants to America. But it constituted the chief intellectual inheritance and it provided the ideological framework for the first generations of New England's elite. And it remained (and remains) genuinely and enduringly persuasive to American persons of faith.

The durability of all Protestant thought is owed to its direct address to the stark and ever-present risk of death. It does not require a particularly mystical temperament, or even much receptivity to spiritual things, to be set to brooding that mortal life is a long and gentle descent into earth's cradle or, worse, a horridly swift smashup on the macadam. Nor does it take any child long to notice that the world around—the trees, the air, the oceans, the winds—feels no pain or loss or regret. Where they collide, the result is likely to be a magnificent thunderstorm, or the erosion of a hillside, or the redness of the maple leaf. But our collisions issue in competition and conspiracy, in murder and mayhem, in sorrow and suffering. We seem to have a different status than the other things of nature.

The cause to which Augustine and then his Reformation heirs a thousand-plus years later traced this state of affairs was Adam's monumental error, committed deep in prehistory but borne by every generation since. The result of Adam's willed disobedience and subsequent fall is the dolorous condition in which we find ourselves—the soul's lightsomeness encased in bodily cerements, constrained by individualist inversion, narrowed by violent ambition. Or, as Edwards told congregations rapt in their pews, the selves of "natural men" grasped and hoarded; they were heavy;

Elisa New is a professor of English at Harvard University and the author of THE LINE'S EYE: POETIC EXPERIENCE, AMERICAN SIGHT *(Harvard University Press).*

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the very ground groaned with their weight. "Natural men" threatened every second to plunge through the crust of earth as through a "rotten covering." The souls of the converted, though, were different. While the unconverted soul was an instrument chronically out of tune, a blot on the fine web of creation, the converted soul was an acoustic chamber exquisitely tuned to the vibrancy of the divine liveliness. Such a soul was a screen and even a prism for God's light. A soul properly wakened to itself was so light that it might fly.

It is the very darkness of this theology—we loosely describe it as Calvinist—that accounts also for its emotional, psychological, and even aesthetic power. A Christian ready to face lack, loss, inadequacy, and constant suspense is also a person open to fullness, surprise, and elation. Dwelling, in Dickinson's phrase, "in Possibility," both desiring and dreading the engulfment that Dickinson called her "Flood Subject," the graced Christian can experience weekly, even daily (and, in the hour of the sermon, minute by minute, phrase by phrase), the pressure of eternity. He can feel the occupation of the present by the past (in the woe of Adam's fall) and the rehabilitation of the past and present by the future (in Christ's redeeming sacrifice). He can live in this world without being of it.

No New Englander until perhaps Dickinson captured the essence of the Calvinist metaphysic in language so visceral and transporting as Edwards did. Yet all his gifts and all his successes notwithstanding, the congregation that Edwards might have reckoned to lead into white-locked old age—a congregation vouchsafed him by dynastic succession, by evangelical achievement, and by a level of intellectual renown that few Americans of the period could match—threw him out. To be sure, for some time there had been grumblings about the financial strain that the large Edwards family put on the congregational till. And Northampton was a notoriously fickle town, a place of "turbulent temper." Yet the withdrawal of confidence in Edwards came not over worldly matters but over spiritual matters. By July 1751, Edwards, his wife Sarah, and their eight unmarried children had vacated their home at Northampton and installed themselves in the Indian Mission at Stockbridge. For the next seven years Edwards would serve as preacher and pastor to the Mohawks on the Housatonic.

Those seven years proved to be Edwards's most intellectually productive. Between his dismissal from Northampton and his brief stint as Princeton's first president (it was cut short by his death), Edwards consolidated the body of work that makes him, to this day, America's most important Protestant thinker and our greatest expert on the American soul. George M. Marsden is right to remind us in his excellent new biography that Edwards was not an American citizen but an eighteenth-century British subject who evinced the tastes and the intellectual affinities of a colonial. Still, Edwards deployed and perfected the techniques of collective persuasion and communal faith-building that gave American Christianity its distinctive character. Making the church on the town green a site for civic as well as spiritual solidarity, Edwards contributed signally to making Christian rhetoric more fully available to the emerging national ethos. But it was in the aftermath of his professional humiliation, while living in virtual exile, that he completed the body of work on the interior life—on the nature of the soul and the psyche, on the relationship of souls to the human community and to the natural world—that makes him not only the ancestor to Billy Sunday and Billy Graham, but also the forebear of Dickinson, Hawthorne, Emerson, and William James. The soul's ebbs and flows were Edwards's supreme subject, and it was in western Massachusetts that he discovered the soul's reason for being: "benevolence to Being in General."

At Stockbridge, Edwards found his own soul soothed by a river view. He had once written of rivers as showing "how all things tend to One, even to God, the boundless ocean." Like other "images of divine things," the river told Edwards that "whatever obstacles are in the way, the waters will bear them away." And if the Housatonic failed to calm his spirit, Edwards could look, as the Psalmist had, to the hills. Or to the sky, where the sifting of pink light at dusk through banded clouds manifested the "sweet Glory of God." Or to the sublime pageant of the spiders, which, swinging from tree to tree on shining skeins of silk, made their progress to death at sea demonstrate that creative effort adorns Creation, though it cannot avert death.

The beauty of the natural world had always provided Edwards with his most profound glimpse of the godhead. When he was nineteen or twenty, and fell in love with Sarah Pierrepoint, he detected in the teenager who "love[d] to be alone, and to wander in the fields and in the mountains" a "singular purity" as well as a "wonderful sweetness" that found its true setting in nature. As a tutor at Yale, when he was twenty-two, Edwards opened the short, ravishing disquisition known as "The Beauty of the World" with these unforgettable words: "The beauty of the world consists wholly of sweet mutual consents." Years later, in Stockbridge, the same wonderment that had moved him to marvel at the "wonderful suitableness of green for the grass and plants, the blue of the sky" and the "great suitableness between the objects of different senses, as between sounds, colors, and smells" was upon him in force, informing his final completed works, the sprightly duet of two "dissertations" completed in 1755. In "The End for Which God Created the World," Edwards revised his ebullient earlier awe before the Creator into a bold philosophical assertion of God's essentially creative nature, arguing that the purpose for which God created the world was the expression of his own Being—the divine effulgency overflowing Oneness in communication and representation. And in "The Nature of True Virtue" he dismissed all particular inclinations in favor of general ones, demoting individuation or separation of any kind as a symptom of fallenness. In this last major work, Edwards concluded that "beauty does not consist in discord and dissent, but in consent and agreement."

Edwards's writing in these years represents an astonishing intellectual harvest. To visit the Edwards corpus at Yale's Beinecke Library today is to be struck immediately by the brimming, limpid quality of the life's work completed in Stockbridge—and by the explosion of intellect and faith that produced it. It is, for a start, prodigious in bulk. There are more than one thousand sermons, as well as autobiographical narratives of faith, copious scientific notes and essays, and ambitious philosophical pieces on mind, on Being, and on beauty. Then there are the deceptively titled "Miscellanies," which add up to hundreds of entries, long and short, ranging from mystical medita-

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tions on Christ's loveliness to comparisons of classical and Christian history to translations from the Hebrew. This is before we even arrive at the major treatises—*Original Sin, The Freedom of the Will, Treatise on Religious Affections*.

Yet it is not actually the bulk of Edwards's work that astonishes so much as its fractal density, the way the pages seem to grow ever more finely branching and reticulated, as though his writing could catch in its light the thinnest filaments of connection between the smallest particles of Being. Often Edwards's handwriting is so small, the letters like pinheads or filings, that one is hard put to imagine the quill delicate enough to sweep these tiny crests across the page. Somehow, though, these motes take direction, and a taut linear vibration is achieved, a page of even ripples. Other pages are cordoned off at the edges into squares and rectangles packed with pointillist citations of chapter and verse. Around the print of tracts from Scotland and into homemade notebooks made out of the front page of the *Boston Gazette,* Edwards crams odd polygons of text (news from the French and Indian wars; the sale of buckrams, dimity, broadcloth, ticking, wine), many of these harp-shaped and fretted and looking like spiderwebs in the eaves. Sometimes he uses sheets as long as scrolls, curled at the edges, and sometimes snuffbox-sized slips. Of the sermons, the most famous, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," is scratched onto a petite pile of squares no larger than a CD jewel case, while the treatise *Original Sin* is 372 manuscript sheets of roughly legal size, each page crowded with a thousand or so words, the whole tucked modestly into a folder one inch thick.

Eighteen linear feet and thirty-seven boxes later, one knows why the "generation of Edwards scholars" to whom Marsden dedicates his biography just cannot get enough, and why, too, they are not yet done. Fifty years after Perry Miller spearheaded the publication of the massive Yale edition, a team of scholars of uncommon assiduity has not yet wrapped up Edwards's seven years in Stockbridge. Luckily for this generation of readers, Marsden has not deferred publication of his fine portrait of Edwards until the edition's completion. Even better, Marsden has honored Miller's championing of Edwards's importance with a vigorous and persuasive rebuttal of Miller's "declension theory."

In a series of influential books and articles, Miller had argued that by Edwards's time, the "New England Mind," as he famously called it, had turned in a decidedly less godly direction. Edwards's chief significance for Miller was that he ushered various modern and even secular notions into American thought, though they were draped in Calvinist garb. Marsden respectfully demurs. He not only shows how Edwards managed to situate Lockean empiricism, Newtonian science, new forms of political thought, and even statistics within the larger framework of his orthodox Calvinism. He also demonstrates how "modern" ideas energized and amplified—rather than supplanted or eclipsed—Edwards's faith in God's utter sovereignty, strengthening his certainty that Christianity was on the upswing. Marsden's greatest accomplishment is to make vivid the resourcefulness, the energy, and the high confidence of Edwards and ministers like him, for whom new discoveries—scientific, philosophical, aesthetic—were so much new fresh evidence for eternal truths.

Edwards held that all ideas were ultimately justified, just as all men were, by the quality of their relationship to God and by their contribution to his Kingdom's establishment. Driving all of his writing and giving unity to its diversity is one central conviction: that in retention is withering; in consent, growth. The only true virtue is consent to Being in general, which is to say, to God. Nothing prospers that does not adjust itself to the stream of God's mighty being; everything prospers that finds that stream. Is not this principle clearly manifest, for instance, in the difference between merely emotional sensation and true religious "affection"? As revival energies waned, the rapid and shocking deterioration of certain conversions showed Edwards that shallow, self-centered professions of faith only accelerated a sinner's tumble to despair and death (as was the case with his relative Josiah Hawley, who gave way to melancholy and cut his own throat), while a truly lamb-like, self-effacing, and submissive willingness to be "affected" promised enduring comfort in God's steady approbation (as Edwards was certain his own beloved Sarah enjoyed).

The principle was also demonstrated in the mind's capacity to discern resemblance and correspondence, in the way

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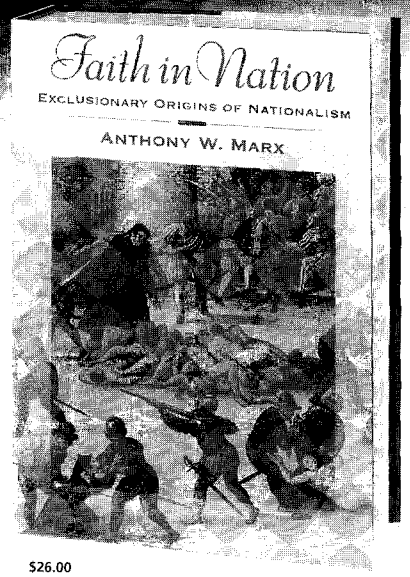

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the understanding ascends along a ladder of likeness, from lovely physical phenomena to even lovelier metaphysical entities. If Locke had shown how human thoughts and abstract conceptions derived from sense impressions, Christian children had always learned their ABCs by first mastering John Cotton's "Milk for Christian Babes" (flowing—from where else?—"Out of the Breasts of Both Testaments"), thus acquiring from primer images a taste for more complex things. The "cup that runneth over" required, first, a cup. And then a pictured mug, and then the rounded "c," and then Christ the Fountain, overflowing.

And was not Being's comprehension of every discrete thing also apparent in the operations of the natural world? Had it not been clear since Adam that mortal bodies fell downward toward the earth's boiling core? The gravity that Newton observed was a confirmation of the Fall, a law comprehended by a greater Law. By the same token, was it not also observable how our own faculty of the will, which could not exert itself except on behalf of some prior inclination, exemplified another principle of Newton's—that every motion was related to every other motion?

Finally, the same principle was discernable in the unique historical role played by the New England ministry. As everything in the world with virtue inclined to the rest of Being—river to ocean, bride to groom, blue to green—was it not also obvious that all Christendom, and all the learned world, inclined to New England? The Connecticut Valley, with its Indian frontier, was the cutting edge of a Redemption that was advanced by godly publication, inspiration, and, most of all, conversion of the Indians. Threats to the coming Redemption were rife on all sides: from the French priests to the North and from the Deists in Europe, from brazen agitators for episcopacy, from Papists infiltrating the middle colonies, and from the dangerous Unitarians making inroads at Harvard itself. They all preached some form of Arminianism, flattering men into believing that they might—through their own efforts or offerings—buy salvation. But this demotion of God's omnipotence was what Reformers had been fighting ever since Luther's campaign against indulgences. New England's ministry was equal to it.

Activist and institutionally aggressive, New England's ministers might preach doom, threaten hell, and bewail backsliding, but their jeremiads, as Sacvan Bercovitch showed years ago, were also instruments of social cohesion. There was no person more culturally central than a godly and imaginative minister. A man favored with the calling to preach might, as in Robert Lowell's "Jonathan Edwards in Western Massachusetts," gallop off to convert souls of a morning and ride back the next day with God's sweet breath in his nostrils, his coat dotted with scripture verses he had pinned there. Wearing his faith on his sleeve in pious Post-it notes, such a man might remain ever a bridegroom, coming home to his Sarah and his congregation, his whole being attired in Christ's "wedden garment."

How, then, did so inspired a preacher, so original a thinker, and so well-born and precocious a member of the establishment as Jonathan Edwards get himself thrown out of his pulpit in his prime? Marsden's richly interesting chapters show that, for all his gifts, Edwards was a man whose virtues and vices, nearly always the same, consistently put this theorist of consent in highly unconsensual positions.

"Born to be a man of strife," Edwards did things the hard way, digging in on exactly those matters of principle and clashing with precisely the interests and the personalities that were most likely to cause him trouble. From his first years at Yale, when he made himself miserable (and unpopular) for his inability to tolerate the rowdiness of the other students, through his alienation at Stockbridge of just that party which, once crossed, would organize itself against him, Edwards showed a lack of plain prudence. His personality led him nearly always to totalize, and thus consistently to choose (as his theology required) against whatever the cherished mores and the local customs happened to be.

It is telling that the only biography, a saint's life, that Edwards wrote took as its subject a man of similar temperament, the inspired and itinerant young missionary David Brainerd. Brainerd's career had begun when he was expelled from Yale for saying that his tutor of divinity "had no more grace than this chair." His career ended seven years later when, tubercular, with much self-sacrifice and a few conversions to show for his broken health, he came to the Edwards's house to fall in love with Edwards's daughter Jerusha before riding on to die elsewhere. Edwards's book on Brainerd sold more copies than any other work he wrote, and the history of religious thought is fortunate that Edwards had his years at his desk in Stockbridge. But had he wanted to protect his career, he would have done better to write a biography of his grandfather Solomon Stoddard. Even a few pages from Stoddard's book would have stood his grandson in good stead.

Marsden's chapter on Stoddard's "stage" is among his book's most revelatory. The Stoddard whom Marsden depicts may have been known as a pope, but Marsden more accurately describes him as western Massachusetts's "feudal baron" or "river god." Pragmatic, matter-of-fact, and concerned above all to consolidate ministerial authority, Stoddard was the only minister in New England in 1700 thick-skinned and powerful enough to bridge the chasm between a ministerial class looking to maintain its authority and a laity desirous of church membership but uncomfortable with public professions of faith. Expanding on the logic of New England's last ministerial compromise, the so-called "Half Way Covenant" of 1662 (which allowed the baptism of the children of "half way" members of the church who had themselves been baptized but could not sincerely testify to having been saved), Stoddard threw open the communion table to any who sought it, treating communion itself as a "converting ordnance." He reasoned that since the strictest standards for church admission gave no protection from hypocrites or self-flatterers, it was best to admit outright the apparently earnest, relying on the minister's homiletical skill and pastoral authority to bring those on the fence into the flock. God had a federal covenant with New England that required corporate conversions, town by town, as Israel had consolidated tribe by tribe. If real sinners got in under the wire, God could be relied upon to do the final sorting.

With the same bluffness with which he pooh-poohed trespassers at the communion table, Stoddard discouraged young ministers, including his perfectionist grandson, from fretting overmuch about the precise wording of their sermons, adjuring them rather to attend to results. For similar reasons, he never paid much attention to the souls of the pleasure-seeking young, trusting that today's carousers and keepers of company were tomorrow's young householders anxious

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for their children's salvation. Until they turned the corner, Stoddard was happy to leave them to their parents' recognizance.

Edwards, by contrast, would eventually make some of his biggest gains among hot-blooded youth. In the fervor of the Awakening, energies hitherto channeled into drinks and dalliances were marvelously sublimated into prayer and piety. More than this, under Edwards and his New Light colleagues Northampton felt some of the egalitarian and socially leveling effects that would henceforth be characteristic of revival in America. The message of God's great impartiality, but also the stimulation of famous visitors, the thrill of sermons out-of-doors, and the sheer excitement of the throng, brought have-nots into the fellowship with haves: class differences were swept away, at least for a season, in the fervor.

But the prudence of Stoddard's approach to the young was luridly confirmed in 1744. Ten years before, Edwards had won many of Northampton's teenagers to Christ. Now, however, they were unmarried persons in their twenties living in their parents' homes. Land values and land scarcity made setting out on one's own difficult, while the chronic labor shortage militated against the breakup of more established economic units. Underemployed and sexually restive, Northampton's young people once again sought entertainment outside their prayer groups. In the spring of 1744, it came to Edwards's attention (probably through the network of his own daughters' friends) that a group of young men, members of the church, had been using a midwife's manual secreted in a chimney for erotic purposes. Worse still, some had been making lewd comments to girls and taunting them about their menstrual cycles. The infamous "Bad Books" controversy was upon him.

Marsden is sympathetic to Edwards's outrage, reminding us that the behavior that Edwards was determined to censure most vigorously was predatory sexual harassment rather than harmless sexual experimentation. He gives Edwards credit for knowing that boys had read dirty books before and would do so again. But he reckons that Edwards handled the controversy badly. While Stoddard would surely have called in favors and strengthened networks, Edwards, betting it all on homiletics, sweated out the details of a lesson about the sinner as "stumbling block." And although ordinarily jealous of ministerial prerogatives, Edwards chose this particular occasion to convene a church committee to arraign the malefactors publicly. A town-wide scandal ensued, one that aroused prurience, tribalism, class warfare, and a good deal of parent-on-parent unneighborliness. The nadir was reached when the mortified parents of the boys involved, and also the parents of "witnesses" to the crimes of others, heard their children's names read out in church in a summons to the investigative committee.

Edwards proved himself even less adroit in handling the two boys who were—as best one can tell from a distance of centuries—real trouble. The cousins Timothy and Simeon Root were loutish young toughs who led the way in circulating what served for pornography in eighteenth-century Massachusetts, but also in harassing the girls. The impaneling of town worthies to judge their acts roused the Roots' class rage, and they reveled in their promotion to Northampton's bad boys. Relishing the attention, they expressed their contempt for the tony minister and his genteel committee with the taunt "I won't bow to a wig." Timothy bestowed on the record, and on posterity, the choice sentiments "I don't care a fart" and "I don't care a turd" for any of them.

Unfortunately for Edwards, the memories of this incident were still fresh when, in 1748, he decided he could no longer countenance his grandfather's policy of allowing communion as a converting ordnance and wanted henceforth to require "sincere" public attestations of salvation. The first reactions to his proposal were dismay, and before long—while Edwards remained closed in his study, applying his diamond saw to the term "sincere"—he steadily lost his base. By the time the matter was turned over to an ad hoc committee of local churches, few in Northampton remained on Edwards's side.

MARSDEN IS DEFT AT SHOWing how the crisis escalated, but he also adds new richness and considerable poignancy to our view of the Edwards household by dividing his attention between Edwards and Sarah, his adored and adoring wife. Indeed, Marsden's portrait of Edwards's loyal, deeply spiritual, depressive helpmate places her among such revered consorts as Abigail Adams and Sophia Hawthorne. It also leaves little doubt that Sarah was probably not very useful when it came to com-

Nightbook

A decade and the small world in chrysalis
Hatches from hunger to hungerless wings
Hungerless flight yes, *saturnid* yes, *sulfur*
(Or, from the nest at night) yes, *passerine*

Horizon betrothed to horizon rings the whole
world's arching circumference the same curve
As of your curving eye, and both will blink
Shut, both will blind, will be blind—

Here on midnight waters, some stars still burn,
Some still burn, devoted to the blank
Surface they mar. Pray quiet but cannot be

Quiet as rose
Petal of quartz in stone. No finger in the ore-deep dawn
No dawn No dawn at wingtip No dawn
Save the furthest star on this water glowing

A clear devotion speaks to us this clearly
Love not principle Love not geometric

All night the heavenly angles sing loose
Their acute labor; Orion's arrow as a sparrow shot,
The north star longing to betray north, the moon
Veiled from *luna,* hidden from moths, this world

This chaos in my mouth I love you
With such shadow, such silence
wife
Put out those stars
Wet wing against the water brushing.

DAN BEACHY-QUICK

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promise for a larger cause—whether it was intra-communal peace, dynastic continuity, or the simple preservation of the family livelihood.

Highly refined in her tastes, Sarah was no more tolerant than her husband of middling manners or religious compromise. She flared hot whenever anyone criticized him, and she was ferocious when any minister seemed to usurp her husband's place. Also, Sarah had, from childhood on, perceived herself as an object of God's particular affection. Throughout her life she had suffered "vaporous" moods relieved by experiences of divine transport so intense that she scarce recovered from the "sweet Elysium" for weeks. Her children once feared that she might be carried off to God forthwith, before Jonathan could get himself home from preaching abroad.

A wife less passionately ambitious for her husband might have reminded him that his grandfather's liberalization of the rules for church membership had been in place for nearly fifty years, and that reversals of policies fifty years old were not easy to bring off. And a wife who did not fall down in swoons and leap from chairs for the love of Christ might have helped Edwards better to sympathize with people who were reluctant to stand up and testify to having received Christ. Indeed, given the fact that few in Northampton, including Edwards himself, experienced Christ so intensely or so frequently as Sarah did, it seems not unlikely that she may have shared in her husband's unpopularity. Jonathan found her nothing but praiseworthy, her transports adding to her spiritual credit as well as to her feminine allure; but others may well have found the exemplary Sarah a bit hard to take.

Despite their conscientiousness, one suspects that by 1749 Jonathan and Sarah were not completely averse to manning the theological torpedoes and letting a last stand for principle rocket them out of a town without sufficient respect for their leadership. In any case, Marsden represents Stockbridge as in certain respects more congenial for both of them. Off the beaten path, Sarah found relief from running her home as a clerical hostelry. Edwards settled into filling his desk, turning out and getting to press the religious treatises that would cement his reputation and lead to an invitation, in 1758, to serve as leader of the College of New Jersey. It was a post that he accepted with initial reluctance, then with pride and, Marsden shrewdly guesses, some pleasant sensation of vindication. But within two months of arriving, Edwards was dead. With smallpox rampant in New Jersey, he was the first in his family to take a dose of the new vaccine, and the dose that he took was infected. He fell ill, developed pox on his throat and palate, and died of thirst and malnourishment. He was fifty-five years old.

One cannot be very confident, however, that Edwards would have succeeded in leading at Princeton much better than he had succeeded at Northampton or at Yale. Despite his ambition and his high standards, his talents did not conduce to the building or the preservation of institutions. It was a matter of his character, as well as his theology, to find all continuities—save those in nature, which were not man's but God's—in some deep sense anathema. Lability was more Edwards's element than stability.

Edwards wrote as if every sentence might be his last—and he did so for years. He preached as if the spiritual estate of every listener depended on what happened within the hour; as if continuity were the illusion and constant risk the reality. George Marsden's fine biography helps us to better understand not only Edwards but, through Edwards, how one of the most rigorous and austere doctrines ever invented got people where they live. It is a high-stakes, vital, experientially rich, and deeply anxious view of existence that orthodox Protestantism offers, one that fertilizes, as it is confirmed by, William James's later assertion that "life is in the transitions." Whether it was because they wanted new lives and were afraid of new lives; or because they lived between England and the Iroquois, or between colony and nation, or between Scripture's light and the New England weather, or simply between life and death, Jonathan Edwards's auditors knew that it was their own condition he described when he told them, "Thy foot shall slip in due time." When he told them that they "hung from a slender thread," they believed. And they still do. ■

Ruth Franklin

The Tin Book

CRABWALK
By Günter Grass
Translated by Krishna Winston
(Harcourt, 234 pp., $25)

GERMAN SOCIETY EXPERIences intellectual crises with the collective intensity that Americans generally reserve for tabloid dramas. Once or twice a decade, an event ignites a debate of extraordinary proportions that seems to permeate all classes and interest groups, from the country's news media to its bars and its living rooms. The 1980s saw Ronald Reagan's visit to the military cemetery at Bitburg and the subsequent *Historikerstreit,* a public debate over the uniqueness of the Holocaust as a historical event. When Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's book *Hitler's Willing Executioners* appeared in German translation in the mid-1990s, a pandemonium of newspaper columns and television talk shows ensued. Such a crisis, whenever it occurs, assumes a level of dominance over the national conversation that is difficult for Americans—or perhaps any non-Germans—to comprehend.

The country's latest crisis has provoked comparisons to the *Goldhagen-Debatte* for its fury, but already it has lasted even longer. In 1997, W. G. Sebald gave a now-famous series of lectures at the University of Zurich in which he argued that German writers had almost universally neglected to document the horrors of the Allied bombing campaign against Germany. The air war, Sebald said, resulted in a national crisis of extreme proportions, yet it was all but invisible in the national literature. He concluded that this absence was the result of an unspoken agreement among German writers to respect the taboo that had arisen in postwar Germany against speaking of the bombing—essentially, a cultural conspiracy, the effects of which have lasted until the present.

The magnitude of the furor evoked by Sebald's lectures is testified to not

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only by the extensive attention that they received in the German media, but also by a chapter that Sebald added when he published them as the book *Luftkrieg und Literatur,* or *Air War and Literature,* two years later, in which he discussed some of the letters he received in response and sought to provide more context for some of his remarks. But Sebald's critics continued to chafe at his primary thesis: first, that such a taboo against acknowledging the devastation of the air war existed, and second, that the writers who supposedly upheld it had somehow failed their nation. Many readers were also dismayed by the strain of moral relativism inherent in Sebald's argument, which provided almost no political context for the bombing of Germany and at times described the devastation in language disturbingly and apparently unself-consciously reminiscent of the Holocaust. As the debate escalated, other books were thrown in as well: Bernhard Schlink's *The Reader,* a novel-in-progress by Peter Schneider. "There have long been signs of such a transformation from a society of perpetrators into a society of victims, but now the thematization of German suffering ... threatens to relativize the suffering of Holocaust victims and survivors," one critic wrote in *Der Spiegel.* "In German literature of late, has there been—clandestinely or openly—a diminishment of German guilt at work?"

With the publication of Sebald's novel *Austerlitz* and his sudden death shortly thereafter, the controversy died down somewhat; but by the time an English translation of his book about the air war appeared earlier this year (under the more abstract title *On the Natural History of Destruction*), it had been rekindled, primarily owing to the appearance, and the huge commercial success, of Jörg Friedrich's *Der Brand: Deutschland im Bombenkrieg 1940–1945,* or *The Fire: Germany During the Bombardment 1940–1945,* which picks up where Sebald's lectures left off. Sebald had called for a "natural history of the destruction," one that would comprehensively document the sheer numbers of the dead, the floods of refugees, the fires that caused the water in Hamburg's canals to boil, the sudden flourishing of rats and flies and other parasites that feed off corpses. As if in response, Friedrich devotes nearly six hundred pages to detailing every aspect of the air war: the weapons used against Germany and in its defense, the strategy of "moral bombing," the propaganda perpetrated by both sides. The moral right of the Germans to declare their own victimhood had been thoroughly re-asserted, but the debate over its legitimacy was still nowhere near resolved.

SEBALD SINGLED OUT MANY GERman writers for criticism, but one name was conspicuously absent from his discussion. For half a century, Günter Grass has been the great literary distiller of German history and culture. At their most extraordinary, his creations are neither political novels nor social novels, but a hybrid, multidimensional form that encompasses both purposes as it sweeps past them. More than any other artistic work of the postwar period, Grass's "Danzig trilogy," especially its massive cornerstones *The Tin Drum* and *Dog Years,* assumed the responsibility of interpreting the experience of the war for a generation of Germans still devastated by its blows. *Cat and Mouse,* the strange novella sandwiched between these monuments, revealed another Grass, one who could pack all the emotional and intellectual wallop of the larger works into the slender confines of a fable.

Stylistically, Grass is an expressionist: he paints with broad strokes. It would be oversimplifying to call his stories allegorical; he works in a rich and profoundly strange surrealism that verges on supernaturalism. Along with Wolfgang Koeppen, Grass belongs to what could be called (after Koeppen's novel of 1953) the "hothouse" school of postwar German writing, characterized by its wildly exuberant shoots of language and imagery. Oskar, the protagonist of *The Tin Drum,* makes up his mind at the age of three that he will stop growing—and he remains only three feet tall until a later crisis provokes him to grow again, a perfect emblem for a nation stunted by Hitler. Other fantastic elements include the slow suicide of Oskar's mother by "fish poisoning" and a fizzy candy with possibly mystical properties that aids Oskar in the seduction of his babysitter. One of the most dramatic scenes depicts the death of Oskar's stepfather, who chokes while trying to swallow his Nazi Party pin after the Russians have invaded Danzig and are occupying his house. These walking, breathing, screaming metaphors were the perfect vocabulary for the convulsed, schizophrenic Germany of the 1950s and early 1960s—and the ideal antidote to the Nazis' enforced sterilization of the language.

Grass has followed his nation through crisis after crisis, from the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming-to-terms-with-the-past) movement of the 1960s right up to the 1990s and re-unification, which he famously opposed. But lately, as the postwar turbulence of German politics has started to even out, Grass's work has taken on a certain programmatic quality. Consider *The Call of the Toad,* published in 1992, a black comedy depicting the efforts of a German man and a Polish woman to start a joint venture after the fall of the Berlin Wall: their plan is to sell cemetery plots in Gdansk (formerly Danzig) to Germans exiled from the area after World War II, capitalizing on the former refugees' sentimental dreams of homeland. The farce, though amusing and often politically sharp, is an unambitious replacement for the lush surrealism and the psychological penetration of Grass's early work.

YET EVEN IF HIS LATER WRITING has been lackluster, Grass—the author of more than two dozen novels, books of poetry, and essay collections published steadily over the last fifty years—remains the elder statesman of German letters. So it is not surprising that he seems to have taken Sebald's complaints about postwar German literature personally. In a public discussion with the poets Czeslaw Milosz, Wislawa Szymborska, and Tomas Venclova in Vilnius in 2000, he commented that he found it distressing that "the memory of the pain inflicted upon the Germans during the war" was still expressed only "belatedly and hesitantly." In postwar literature, he said, "the memory of the many dead from the nights of bombing and the mass flight" had found little room for expression. And now Grass seems to have sought to rectify this past omission with a novel that was published in Germany last year, shortly before *Der Brand,* and now appears in English translation.

Crabwalk takes as its starting point the sinking of the *Wilhelm Gustloff,* a German cruise ship turned refugee carrier that was attacked on January 30, 1945 by a Soviet submarine: more than nine thousand people drowned, including four thousand children, qualifying the episode as the worst maritime disaster in history. Everything about this ambiguous book, from its choice of subject matter to the

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explicit self-interrogation of its characters, reveals its deliberate calibration to the current political temperature. It is not so much a settling of the current controversy as a symptom of it; and for this reason it is sadly representative of the recent turn in Grass's work. His novels have always been closely tied to actual events, but lately he seems not to be charting the political current so much as swimming along with the tide. This would be an unfortunate circumstance for any writer, but it is particularly so with regard to Grass, who is, more than any other contemporary writer, uniquely positioned to expose the falsity of the new debate over German victimhood.

THE BOOK OPENS WITH AN APOlogia. "Why only now?" asks the figure of the writer who lurks in the background of this book, a figure clearly meant to represent Grass. And the narrator—who, in a different way, also stands in for the author—attempts to stammer an answer: "Well, because Mother's incessant nagging... Because I wanted to cry the way I did at the time, when the cry spread across the water, but couldn't anymore ... Because for the true story ... hardly more than three lines ... Because only now..." This is the voice of Paul Pokriefke, a mediocre journalist in his fifties, separated from his wife and estranged from his adolescent son. There is nothing remarkable about him other than the circumstances of his birth: his mother, Tulla, a teenager at the time and nine months pregnant, was a passenger on the *Gustloff*, and thanks to her condition, she was among the few who were rescued. She delivered her son aboard a lifeboat as the ship sank into the Baltic Sea.

Tulla wishes that she could tell the story of her experiences during the war herself. "I could write a novel," she says at one point. "The worst was the bombers, when they came in real low over us and pow-pow-pow...." But Paul is the writer, and so she nags at him to do it. "That sea there full of ice, and them poor little ones all floating head down," she repeatedly reminds him in her homely dialect. "You've got to write about it. That much you owe us, seeing as how you were one of the lucky ones and survived." Paul, though, has always avoided discussing anything related to the *Gustloff*, to the point that he is even reluctant to celebrate his birthday for fear that someone might comment on the date's significance. (The ill-starred January 30 was also the birthday of the ship's eponym, a middle-level Nazi functionary, and, less obscurely, the date in 1933 on which the Nazis seized power.) He was not alone in his reluctance to mention the tragedy: in postwar Germany, he says, there was an unspoken taboo against any talk of German suffering during the war. As Tulla puts it, for years "you couldn't bring up the [*Gustloff*]. Over here in the East we sure as hell couldn't. And when you in the West talked about the past, it was always about other bad stuff, like Auschwitz and such. Lordy, lordy!" (It is a curious feature of this book that all its characters appear to have followed the recent debate in the newspapers very closely, though no one actually mentions it.)

But now—the time period of the novel is not specified, but it could not take place at any moment other than the present—Paul has become a devotee of the Internet: "our global playground, the vaunted ultimate venue for communication." In the course of his "bouncing around in the Net," he becomes obsessed with a website devoted to the ship and its history. The site, designed in Gothic script, purports to be sponsored by a neo-Nazi group calling itself the "Comrades of Schwerin" (Gustloff's hometown, and where Paul was brought up), and it is devoted to retelling not only the story of Gustloff's "martyrdom"—his assassination by a Jew, David Frankfurter, in 1936—but also the martyrdom of those aboard the ship bearing his name.

"I had a growing suspicion that what lurked behind the URL ... was no skinhead group calling itself the Comrades of Schwerin but a solitary clever young fanatic," Paul says. "Someone scuttling crabwise like me, sniffing for the scents and similar exudations of history." As he follows the elaborate chat-room dialogue between "Wilhelm," the site's proprietor, and his interlocutor "David," a Jew who debates with him about German revisionism, it becomes clear to him that "Wilhelm" is actually his own son, Konny. "History, or, to be more precise, the history we Germans have repeatedly mucked up, is a clogged toilet," Paul comments. "We flush and flush, but the shit keeps rising." Meanwhile, he has been contacted by an older writer, a former instructor of his, who presses him into service as a sort of ghostwriter to tell the tale of the sinking of the *Gustloff*.

The "writer" guiding Paul's hand is, of course, Grass. "Soon after the publication of that mighty tome *Dog Years*, this material had been dumped at his feet," Paul reports. "He—who else?—should have been the one to dig through it.... Unfortunately, he said, he hadn't been able to pull it off.... Now it was too late for him. He hadn't invented me as a surrogate, rather he had discovered me, after a long search, on the list of survivors, like a piece of lost property." This is a sly inside joke: Tulla Pokriefke appeared as a minor character in two novels of the Danzig trilogy, *Cat and Mouse* and *Dog Years*, but with this particular detail of her background absent, almost as if the "taboo" had then prevented Grass from mentioning it.

The doubling of the narrator conveniently allows Grass to argue both sides of the issue. *Crabwalk* is not exactly a novel about the sinking of the *Gustloff*; it is, rather, a novel about the possibility of writing a novel about the sinking of the *Gustloff*. As its title suggests, the book proceeds with a jerky, non-linear motion that manifests Paul's own ambivalence about his role in the re-telling of this history. "Should I do as I was taught and unpack one life at a time, in order, or do I have to sneak up on time in a crabwalk, seeming to go backward but actually scuttling sideways, and thereby working my way forward fairly rapidly?" he asks himself toward the beginning. His rejection of "order," of the way he was taught to do things, is typical of his cohort's response to their parents' generation. Paul and his contemporaries, coming of age in the 1960s, were the first to open a full-fledged investigation into the crimes of the Nazi era, crimes literally (in many cases) committed by their fathers. Like many of Grass's other protagonists, Paul has a multiplicity of candidates for his fatherhood, which is to say that he really has no father at all. This is a common trait in fiction about the '68ers, as they are known, which often depicts them wrestling with and finally rejecting their guilty fathers, resulting in an allegedly fatherless generation that serves as an ironic remedy to the Nazis' *Vaterland* propaganda.

But if Paul is ambivalent about the use of remembering the German suffering during the war, the Grass figure comes down firmly on the other side of the question. "This business has been gnawing at the old boy," Paul says about the older writer at one point.

Actually, he says, his generation

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should have been the one. It should have found words for the hardships endured by the Germans fleeing East Prussia: the westward treks in the depths of winter, people dying in blinding snowstorms, expiring by the side of the road or in holes in the ice when the frozen bay known as the Frisches Haff began to break up under the weight of horse-drawn carts after being hit by bombs, and still, from the direction of Heiligenbeil, more and more people streaming across the endless snowy waste, terrified of Russian reprisal.... Never, he said, should his generation have kept silent about such misery, merely because its own sense of guilt was so overwhelming, merely because for years the need to accept responsibility and show remorse took precedence, with the result that they abandoned the topic to the right wing. This failure, he says, was staggering.

It would be naïve, of course, to take the "Grass" character in the novel—this "old man ... who has worn himself out with writing"—as identical to Grass himself. Still, the book, with its continual and very self-conscious crossing of the lines between history and fiction, mischievously encourages such a blurring. We are presented with a fictional character drawn from Grass's own previous work, muddling through the writing of a book about an actual historical event, alternately egged on and chastised by both a character who bears a strong resemblance to Grass and another character straight out of Grass's fiction. The old man "thinks he has found in me someone who has no choice but to stand in for him," Paul remarks. "But it's not him forcing me to do this, it's Mother. And it's only because of her that the old man is poking his nose in; she's forcing him to force me...." (Even the URL for the "Comrades of Schwerin" website, mentioned repeatedly, is real, in a way: it turns out to be the site for Grass's book.) And the fact that Grass puts the *Luftkrieg* argument in his own mouth, as it were, is a powerful suggestion that he does in fact subscribe to it himself. Not to mention that the very existence of *Crabwalk* would seem to justify this interpretation: if Grass did not believe that the time was right for such a novel ("Why only now?"), why would he have written it?

"HIS GENERATION SHOULD have been the one" to tell the story, the "old man" laments. But actually Grass's generation was the one to tell the story. Here is one writer on the refugees:

> The streets were clogged with refugees from East Prussia and the Delta. It was just about impossible to get through the underpass by the Sports Palace.... What traffic! Tanks retreating from the heights and the Delta, some being towed. From the trees—lindens if I remember rightly—dangled soldiers and Volksturm men. To their jackets were affixed cardboard signs identifying them quite legibly as traitors.... There were also whole clusters of youngsters strung up in uniforms that were too big for them, and several times I thought I recognized Störtebeker—but youngsters at the end of a rope all look alike.

And here is the same writer, in a remarkable passage, on the fires caused by the bombing:

> Inner City and Outer City, Old City, New City and Old New City, Lower City and Spice City—what had taken seven hundred years to build burned down in three days.... It was Russians, Poles, Germans, and Englishmen all at once who were burning the city's Gothic bricks for the hundredth time. Hook Street, Long Street, and Broad Street, Big Weaver Street and Little Weaver Street were in flames; Tobias Street, Hound Street, Old City Ditch, Outer City Ditch, the ramparts and Long Bridge, all were in flames. Built of wood, Crane Gate made a particularly fine blaze. In Breeches-maker Street, the fire had itself measured for several pairs of extra-loud breeches. The Church of St. Mary was burning inside and out, festive light effects could be seen through its ogival windows. What bells had not been evacuated from St. Catherine, St. John, St. Brigit, Saints Barbara, Elisabeth, Peter, and Paul, from Trinity and Corpus Christi, melted in their belfries and dripped away without pomp or ceremony. In the Big Mill red wheat was milled. Butcher Street smelled of burnt Sunday roast. The Municipal Theater was giving a premiere, a one-act play entitled The Firebug's Dream.... Holy Ghost Street was burning in the name of the Holy Ghost. Joyously, the Franciscan Monastery blazed in the name of St. Francis, who had loved fire and sung hymns to it. Our Lady Street burned for Father and Son at once. Needless to say that Lumber Market, Coal Market, and Haymarket burned to the ground. In Baker Street the ovens burned and the bread and rolls with them. In Milk Pitcher Street the milk boiled over. Only the West Prussian Fire Insurance Building, for purely symbolic reasons, refused to burn down.

Both these passages come from *The Tin Drum*. True, the above fantasia on the tragedies of war, equal parts wordplay and eyewitness account, is not what Sebald meant by a "natural history"; but its effect is undeniably far more potent than Jörg Friedrich's meticulous listings of weapons and generals. And it paradoxically shows that Sebald was in many ways right. If the suffering of German civilians is to be remembered and recognized, art is the most powerful means of doing so. The greatest political novels explore at length the intellectual and social and emotional complexities that surround an urgent issue, without descending into polemical simplicities. But there is the rub: the call for work that emphasizes German victimhood requires precisely the removal of context and complexity that turns novels into polemics.

Considering that Grass has already written so profoundly about the effects of the war, why did he pay any heed to this simplifying and demagogic call to decontextualize German suffering? It is obvious from his earlier work that he once knew how distorting such a reevaluation is: the Danzig trilogy owes its great power not least to his determination to provide a full, even epic picture of the war years. And coming from Grass, *Crabwalk*'s pandering to the politics and the intellectual fashions of the season is worse than disappointing. For not only does it result in a novel stocked with wooden characters and ludicrous dialogue, it also is evidence of Grass's failure to take the lead in exposing the wrongheadedness of the current debate. He, of all people, should have pointed out that the question of whether German suffering should be given priority in the understanding of World War II is fundamentally misguided. For it is a question he had already answered. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Survivor

THERE'S STILL NO DEFINITIVE answer to the question, "What do you give the man who has everything?" But there does appear to be some consensus about what to give the man who has testicular cancer. Which is why last November, after I was diagnosed with the disease, I became the owner of several copies of Lance Armstrong's autobiography, *It's Not About the Bike*. Armstrong is the poster boy for testicular cancer. He not only survived the disease, he resumed his professional cycling career and has gone on to win a record-tying five straight Tour de France titles, his most recent—and narrowest—victory coming this past weekend. Armstrong's phenomenal success, he has said many times, comes not in spite of his illness but because of it. "My first thought when I was going to die," Armstrong once told a reporter, "[was not], I'm gonna be a better bike rider, I'm gonna be a better person, I'm gonna be stronger, I'm gonna be happier. I didn't think about any of that. But that's what's happened."

EVEN BEFORE I STARTED RECEIVING copies of *It's Not About the Bike*, my doctor—who intuited that the book would likely be coming my way—warned me not to read it. Armstrong, he explained, had a particularly severe case of testicular cancer. Assuming the discomfort he was experiencing in one of his testicles was simply a result of too much time spent on his bike, Armstrong did not bother to get checked out until the testicle had swelled to the size of an orange; by that point the cancer had spread to his lungs, abdomen, and brain, and doctors put his chances of survival at 20 percent. He endured surgery to remove his cancerous testicle, more surgery to remove lesions from his brain, and then four cycles of aggressive chemotherapy—which permanently damaged his kidneys and also left him sterile—before he got better. In contrast, my doctor explained, I had hopefully caught my cancer at an early stage—my testicle, after all, was no bigger than a clementine—and, with any luck, I would undergo a much easier course of treatment. Armstrong's book, my doctor said, would needlessly scare me.

MY DOCTOR WAS RIGHT. IT'S REMARKable how quickly and easily my treatment went. I was diagnosed on a Thursday, when an ultrasound showed a growth on my left testicle, which had been bothering me for a few weeks. I had outpatient surgery to remove the testicle the following Monday. And then, the following Friday, I met with my doctor to go over the pathology report. He told me my cancer appeared confined to the testicle that had been removed: I wouldn't need additional surgery; I wouldn't need chemotherapy. He told me I had the option of undergoing a three-week course of radiation treatment, just to be safe in case there were cancer cells in my lymph nodes, and I decided that was a good idea. At the end of my radiation treatments, I was told I should consider myself cancer-free. I will need to be monitored with routine blood tests and CT scans for the next five years to make sure the cancer doesn't recur, but, assuming those tests all come back normal (as they're expected to), I am cured. Even by the standards of testicular cancer—which has a 95 percent cure rate—my case was extremely treatable. The favored term these days for a person who has had cancer and lives to tell about it is "survivor." But, having gone from diagnosis to cure in the span of little more than a week, I can't help but feel that designation may be a little grand for me.

RECENTLY, WITH ARMSTRONG MAKING headlines, I picked up a copy of *It's Not About the Bike* that had been gathering dust on my shelf. I'm not sure what I thought my reaction to the book would be, but I was surprised when, a few chapters in, I started to cry. I wasn't as moved by the sections in which Armstrong describes his anxiety before undergoing brain surgery or his intense suffering during chemotherapy. Rather, it was the less dramatic aspects of Armstrong's tale that affected me—and brought me back to that week in November when, as quick and easy as it may seem to me now, I experienced enough fear and anxiety and then relief and elation to last a lifetime.

I FELT AGAIN THE PANG OF PANIC Armstrong describes when the ultrasound technician moves the wand up from your groin to your abdomen—which is when you realize that she has found a growth on your testicle and is now checking to determine if the cancer has spread. I recalled the difficulty of even saying the word "cancer" without breaking down when you deliver the bad news to loved ones. I remembered the awe and admiration you feel toward the doctors who treat you and the love and gratitude you have for your family and friends. I was reminded of the profound dread that fills you while you wait to find out how severe your cancer is. And, most importantly, I remembered the euphoric, almost indescribable sense of joy you experience when, if you're one of the lucky ones, the doctor tells you that, after everything you've been through—whether it's one surgery and a week of worrying or multiple surgeries and months of chemo—the test results look normal and *you are not sick*.

I AM A SPORTS FAN, BUT I STOPPED having sports heroes when I was old enough to realize that athletic accomplishments don't necessarily speak to character. And I'm reluctant to view someone as noble just because, in the face of overwhelming odds, he beat a disease. After all, there are many bad, cowardly people who cheat death and many good, brave people who ultimately succumb. But I couldn't help following Armstrong's performance during this most recent Tour de France—the first Tour since my own bout with cancer—with more than just a casual fan's interest. I know that Armstrong and I have virtually nothing in common. He has a heart that is literally almost one-third larger than that of an average man and can ride the Tour's nearly 3,500 kilometers, through rain and over mountains, at an average speed of more than 40 kilometers per hour; I'm happy if I can run a mile in under eight minutes. He has earned the designation of survivor; I'm not convinced that I deserve it. But, when Armstrong won his fifth straight Tour, I felt a sense of satisfaction and identification I didn't think a person could get from watching a sporting event. Armstrong once said that, when he won the Tour de France, he won for the "cancer community." Now I know what it feels like to be a member.

JASON ZENGERLE

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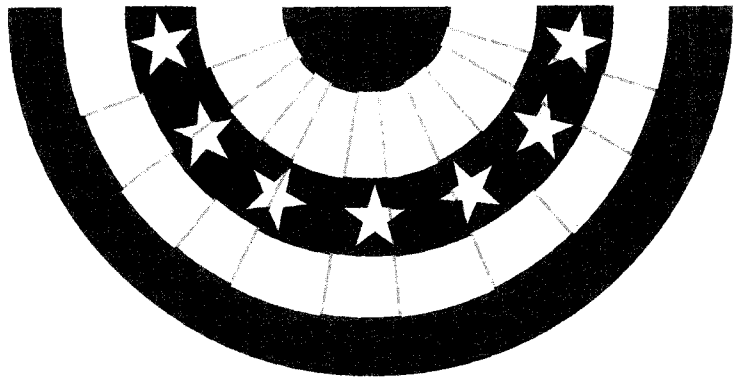

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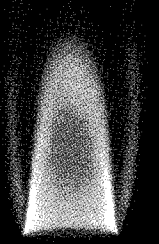

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